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**A Tale of the Rise of the
Dutch Republic**

by
G. A. HENTY

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*This book has been carefully edited and
slightly abridged to meet the reading tastes
of the Modern Boy*

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CHAPTER I

THE "GOOD VENTURE"

ROTHERHITHE in the year 1572 differed very widely from the Rotherhithe of today. It was then a scattered village, inhabited chiefly by a seafaring population. It was here that the captains of many of the ships that sailed from the port of London had their abode. Snug cottages with trim gardens lay thickly along the banks of the river, where their owners could sit and watch the vessels passing up and down or moored in the stream. The trade of London was comparatively small in those days, and most of the vessels would be recognised and the captains known, and hats would be waved and welcomes or adieus shouted as the vessels passed.

There was something that savoured of Holland in the appearance of Rotherhithe; for it was with the Low Countries that the chief trade of England was carried on; and the mariners who spent their lives in journeying to and fro between London and the ports of Zeeland, Friesland, and Flanders, who for the most part picked up the language of the country, and sometimes even brought home wives from across the sea, naturally learned something from their neighbours. Nowhere, perhaps, in and about London were the houses so clean and bright, and the gardens so trimly and neatly kept, as in the village of Rotherhithe, and in all Rotherhithe not one was brighter and more comfortable than the abode of Captain William Martin.

It was low and solid in appearance; the wooden framework was unusually massive, and there was much quaint

carving on the beams. The furniture was heavy and solid, and polished with bees'-wax until it shone. The fire-places were lined with Dutch tiles; the flooring was of oak, polished as brightly as the furniture. The appointments from roof to floor were Dutch; and no wonder that this was so, for every inch of wood in its framework and beams, floor and furniture, had been brought across from Friesland by William Martin in his ship the *Good Venture*. It had been the dowry he received with his pretty young wife, Sophie Plomaert.

Sophie was the daughter of a well-to-do worker in wood near Amsterdam. She was his only daughter, and he and her three brothers determined that she should always bear her former home in her recollection. They therefore prepared as her wedding-gift a facsimile of the home in which she had been born and bred. The furniture and framework were similar in every particular, and it needed only the insertion of the brickwork and plaster when it arrived. Two of her brothers made the voyage in the *Good Venture*, and themselves put the framework, beams, and flooring together, and saw to the completion of the house on the strip of ground that William Martin had purchased on the bank of the river.

Even a large summer-house that stood at the end of the garden was a reproduction of that upon the bank of the canal at home; and when all was completed and William Martin brought over his bride she could almost fancy that she was still at home near Amsterdam. Ever since, she had once a year sailed over in her husband's ship, and spent a few weeks with her kinsfolk. When at home from sea the great summer-house was a general rendezvous of William Martin's friends in Rotherhithe, all skippers like himself, some still on active service, others, who had retired on their savings; not all, however, were fortunate enough to have houses on the river bank; and

the summer-house was therefore useful not only as a place of meeting but as a look-out at passing ships.

There were few men in Rotherhithe so well endowed with this world's goods as Captain Martin. His father had been a trader in the city, but William's tastes lay towards the sea rather than the shop, and as he was the youngest of three brothers he had his way in the matter. When he reached the age of twenty-three his father died, and with his portion of his savings William purchased the principal share of the *Good Venture*, which ship he had a few months before come to command.

When he married he had received not only his house but a round sum of money as Sophie's portion. With this he could have liked to have purchased the other shares of the *Good Venture*, but being, though a sailor, a prudent man, he did not like to put all his eggs into one basket, and accordingly bought with it a share in another ship. Three children had been born to William and Sophie Martin—a boy and two girls. Edward, who was the eldest, was at the time this story begins nearly sixteen. He was an active well-built young fellow, and had for five years sailed with his father in the *Good Venture*. That vessel was now lying in the stream a quarter of a mile higher up, having returned from a trip to Holland upon the previous day.

The first evening there had been no callers, for it was an understood thing at Rotherhithe that a captain on his return wanted the first evening at home alone with his wife and family; but on the evening of the second day, when William Martin had finished his work of seeing to the unloading of his ship, the visitors began to drop in fast, and the summer-house was well-nigh as full as it could hold. Mistress Martin, who was now a comely matron of six-and-thirty, busied herself in seeing that the maid and her daughters. Constance and Janet, supplied

the visitors with horns of home-brewed beer, or with strong waters brought from Holland for those who preferred them.

"You have been longer away than usual, Captain Martin," one of the visitors remarked.

"Yes," the skipper replied. "Trade is but dull, and though the *Good Venture* bears a good repute for speed and safety, we were a week before she was chartered. I know not what will be the end of it all. I verily believe that no people have ever been so cruelly treated for their conscience' sake since the world began; for you know it is not against the King of Spain but against the Inquisition that the opposition has been made. The people of the Low Countries know well enough it would be madness to contend against the power of the greatest country in Europe, and to this day they have borne, and are bearing, the cruelty to which they are exposed in quiet despair, and without a thought of resistance to save their lives. There may have been tumults in some of the towns, as in Antwerp, where the lowest part of the mob went into the cathedrals and churches and destroyed the shrines and images; but as to armed resistance to the Spaniards, there has been none.

"The first expeditions that the Prince of Orange made into the country were composed of German mercenaries, with a small body of exiles. They were scarce joined by any of the country-folk. Though, as you know, they gained one little victory, they were nigh all killed or cut to pieces. So horrible was the slaughter perpetrated by the soldiers of the tyrannical Spanish governor Alva, that when the Prince of Orange again marched into the country not a man joined him, and he had to fall back without accomplishing anything. The people seem stunned by despair. Has not the Inquisition condemned the whole of the inhabitants of the Netherlands—save

only a few persons specially named—to death as heretics? and has not Philip confirmed the decree, and ordered it to be carried into instant execution without regard to age or sex? Were three millions of men, women, and children ever before sentenced to death by one stroke of the pen, only because they refused to change their religion? Every day there are hundreds put to death by the orders of Alva's Blood Council, as it is called, without even the mockery of a trial."

There was a general murmur of rage and horror from the assembled party.

"Where I her qucen's majesty," an old captain said, striking his fist on the table, "I would declare war with Philip of Spain tomorrow, and would send every man who could bear arms to the Netherlands to aid the people to free themselves from their tyrants. To think of such cruelty makes the blood run through my veins as if I were a lad again."

"It is past understanding," another old sailor said. "It is too awful for us to take in."

"It is said," another put in, "that the King of France has leagued himself with Philip of Spain, and that the two have bound themselves to exterminate the Protestants in all their dominions, and as that includes Spain, France, Italy, the Low Countries, and most of Germany, it stands to reason as we who are Protestants ought to help our friends; for you may be sure, neighbours, that if Philip succeeds in the Low Countries he will never rest until he has tried to bring England under his rule: also, and to plant the Inquisition with its bonfires and its racks and tortures here."

An angry murmur of assent ran round the circle.

"We would fight them, you may be sure," Captain Martin said. "to the last; but Spain is a mighty power, and all know that there are no soldiers in Europe can

stand against their pikemen. If the Low Countries, which number as many souls as we, cannot make a stand against them with all their advantages of rivers, and swamps, and dykes, and fortified towns, what chance should we have who have none of these things? What I say, comrades, is this: we have got to fight Spain—you know the grudge Philip bears us—and it is far better that we should go over and fight the Spaniards in the Low Countries, side by side with the people there, and with all the advantages that their rivers and dykes give, and with the comfort that our wives and children are safe here at home, than wait till Spain has crushed down the Netherlands and exterminated the people, and is then able, with France as her ally, to turn her whole strength against us. That's what I say."

"And you say right, Captain Martin. If I were the queen's majesty I would send word to Philip tomorrow to call off his black crew of monks and inquisitors. The people of the Netherlands have no thought of resisting the rule of Spain, and would be, as they have been before, Philip's obedient subjects, if he would but leave their religion alone. It's the doings of the Inquisition that have driven them to despair. And when one hears what you are telling us, that the king has ordered the whole population to be exterminated—man, woman, and child—no wonder they are preparing to fight to the last; for it's better to die fighting a thousand times, than it is to be roasted alive with your wife and children!"

"I suppose the queen and her councillors see that if she were to meddle in this business it might cost her her kingdom, and us our liberty," another captain said. "The Spaniards could put, they say, seventy or eighty thousand trained soldiers in the field, while, except the queen's own body-guard, there is not a soldier in

England; while their navy is big enough to take the fifteen or twenty ships the queen has, and to break them up to burn their galley-fires."

"That is all true enough," Captain Martin agreed; "but our English men have fought well on the plains of France before now, and I don't believe we should fight worse today. We beat the French when they were ten to one against us over and over, and what our fathers did we can do. What you say about the navy is true also. They have a big fleet, and we have no vessels worth speaking about, but we are as good sailors as the Spaniards any day, and as good fighters; and though I am not saying we could stop their fleet if it came sailing up the Thames, I believe when they landed we should show them that we were as good men as they. They might bring seventy thousand soldiers, but there would be seven hundred thousand Englishmen to meet; and if we had but sticks and stones to fight with, they would not find that they would have an easy victory."

"Yes, that's what you think and I think, neighbour; but, you see, we have not got the responsibility of it. The queen has to think for us all. Though I for one would be right glad if she gave the word for war, she may well hesitate before she takes a step that might bring ruin, and worse than ruin, upon all her subjects. We must own, too, that much as we feel for the people of the Low Countries in their distress, they have not always acted wisely. When the mob of Antwerp broke into the cathedral, and destroyed the altars and carvings, and tore up the vestments, and threw down the Maries and the saints, and then did the same in the other churches in the town and country round, they behaved worse than children, and showed themselves as intolerant and bigoted as the Spaniards themselves. They angered Philip beyond hope of forgiveness, and gave him

something like an excuse for his cruelties towards them."

"Ay, ay, that was a bad business," Captain Martin agreed; "a very bad business, comrade. And although these things were done by a mere handful of the scum of the town, the respectable citizens raised no hand to stop it. There were plenty of men who have banded themselves together under the name of 'the beggars,' and sworn to fight for their religion, to have put these fellows down if they had chosen. They did not choose, and now Philip's vengeance will fall on them all alike."

"Well, what think you of this business, Ned?" one of the captains said, turning to the lad, who was standing in a corner.

"Were I a Dutchman, and living under such tyranny," Ned said passionately, "I would rise and fight to the death rather than see my family martyred. If none other would rise with me, I would take a sword and go out and slay the first Spaniard I met, and again another, until I was killed."

"Bravo, Ned! Well spoken, lad!" three or four of the captains said; but his father shook his head.

"Those are the words of hot youth, Ned; and were you living there you would do as others—keep quiet till the executioners came to drag you away, seeing that did you, as you say you would, use a knife against a Spaniard, it would give the butchers a pretext for the slaughtering of hundreds of innocent people."

The lad looked down abashed at the reproof, then he said: "Well, father, if I could not rise in arms or slay a Spaniard and then be killed, I would leave my home and join the sea beggars under La Marck."

"There is more reason in that," his father replied; "though La Marck is a ferocious noble, and his followers make not very close inquiry whether the ships they

attack are Spanish or those of other people. Still it is hard for a man to starve; and when time passes and they can light upon no Spanish merchantmen, one cannot blame them too sorely if they take what they require out of some other passing ship. But there is reason at the bottom of what you say. Did the men of the sea-coast, seeing that their lives and those of their families are now at the mercy of the Spaniards, take to their ships with those dear to them and continually harass the Spaniards, they could work them great harm. At present it seems to me the people are in such depths of despair, that they have not heart for any such enterprise. But I believe that some day or other the impulse will be given, and then they will rise as one man."

"Then they must be speedy about it, friend Martin," another said. "They say that eighty thousand have been put to death one way or another since Alva came into his government. Another ten years and there will be scarce an able-bodied man remaining in the Low Country. By the way, you were talking of the beggars of the sea. Their fleet is lying at present at Dover, and it is said that the Spanish ambassador is making grave complaints to the queen on the part of his master against giving shelter to these men, whom he brands as not only enemies of Spain, but as pirates and robbers of the sea."

"I was talking with Master Sheepshanks," another mariner put in, "whose ships I sailed for thirty years, and who is an alderman and knows what is going on, and he told me that from what he hears it is like enough that the queen will yield to the Spanish request. So long as she chooses to remain friends with Spain openly, whatever her thoughts and opinions may be, she can scarcely allow her ports to be used by the enemies of Philip. It must go sorely against her high spirit; but till she and her council resolve that England shall brave the whole

strength of Spain, she cannot disregard the remonstrances of Philip. It is a bad business, neighbours, a bad business; and the sooner it comes to an end the better. No one doubts that we shall have to fight Spain one of these days, and I say that it were better to fight while our brethren of the Low Countries can fight by our side, than to wait till Spain, having exterminated them, can turn her whole power against us."

There was a general chorus of assent, and then the subject changed to the rates of freight to the northern ports. The grievous need for the better marking of shallows and dangers, the rights of seamen, wages, and other matters, were discussed until the assembly broke up. Ned's sisters joined him in the garden.

"I hear, Constance," the boy said to the elder, "there has been no news from our grandfather and uncles since we have been away."

"No word whatever, Ned. Our mother does not say much, but I know she is greatly troubled and anxious about it."

"That she may well be, Constance, seeing that neither quiet conduct nor feebleness nor aught else avail to protect any from the rage of the Spaniards. You who stay at home here only hear general tales of the cruelties done across the sea, but if you heard the tales that we do at their ports they would drive you almost to madness. Not that we hear much, for we have to keep on board our ships, and may not land or mingle with the people; but we learn enough from the merchants who come on board to see about the landing of their goods to make our blood boil. They do right to prevent our landing; for so fired is the sailors' blood by these tales of massacre, that were they to go ashore they would, I am sure, be speedily embroiled with the Spaniards.

"You see how angered these friends of our father are

who are Englishmen, and have no Dutch blood in their veins, and who feel only because they are touched by these cruelties, and because the people of the Low Country are Protestants; but with us it is different, our mother is one of these persecuted people, and we belong to them as much as to England. We have friends and relations there who are in sore peril, and who may for aught we know have already fallen victims to the cruelty of the Spaniards. Had I my will I would join the beggars of the sea, or I would ship with Drake or Cavendish and fight the Spaniards in the Indian seas."

"It is very sad," Constance said; "but what can be done?"

"Something must be done soon," Ned replied gloomily. "Things cannot go on as they are. So terrible is the state of things, so heavy the taxation, that in many towns all trade is suspended. In Brussels, I hear, Alva's own capital, the brewers have refused to brew, the bakers to bake, the tapsters to draw liquors. The city swarms with multitudes of men thrown out of employment. The Spanish soldiers themselves have long been without pay, for Alva thinks of nothing but bloodshed. Consequently they are insolent to their officers, care little for order, and insult and rob the citizens in the streets. Assuredly something must come of this ere long; and the people's despair will become a mad fury. If they rise, Constance, and my father does not say nay, I will assuredly join them and do my best.

"I do not believe that the queen will forbid her subjects to give their aid to the people of the Netherlands. I am sixteen now, and my father says that in another year he will rate me as his second mate, and there are not many men on board who can pull more strongly a rope, or work more stoutly at the capstan when we heave our anchor. Besides, as we all talk Dutch as well as English,

I should be of more use than men who know nought of the language of the country."

Constance shook her head. "I do not think, Ned, that our father would give you leave, at any rate not until you have grown up into a man. He looks to having you with him, and to your succeeding him some day in the command of the *Good Venture* while he remains quietly at home with our mother."

Ned agreed with a sigh. "I fear that you are right, Constance, and that I shall have to stick to my trade of sailing; but if the people of the Netherlands rise against their tyrants, it would be hard to be sailing backwards and forwards doing a peaceful tradé between London and Holland whilst our friends and relatives are battling for their lives."

A fortnight later, the *Good Venture* filled up her hold with a cargo for Brill, a port where the united Rhine, Waal, and Maas flow into the sea. On the day before she sailed a proclamation was issued by the queen forbidding any of her subjects to supply De la Marck and his sailors with meat, bread, or beer. The passage down the river was slow, for the winds were contrary, and it was ten days afterwards, the 31st of March, when they entered the broad mouth of the river and dropped anchor off the town of Brill. It was late in the evening when they arrived. In the morning an officer came off to demand the usual papers and documents, and it was not until nearly two o'clock that a boat came out with the necessary permission for the ship to warp up to the wharves and discharge her cargo.

Just as Captain Martin was giving the order for the capstan bars to be manned, a fleet of some twenty-four ships suddenly appeared round the seaward point of the land.

"Wait a moment, lads," the captain said; "half an hour

will make no great difference in our landing. We may as well wait and see what is the meaning of this fleet. They do not look to me to be Spaniards, nor seem to be a mere trading fleet. I should not wonder if they are the beggars of the sea, who have been forced to leave Dover, starved out from the effect of the queen's proclamation, and have now come here to pick up any Spaniard they may meet sailing out."

The fleet dropped anchor at about half a mile from the town. Just as they did so, a ferryman named Koppelstok, who was carrying passengers across from the town of Maaslandluis, a town on the opposite bank a mile and a half away, was passing close by the *Good Venture*.

"What think you of yon ships?" the ferryman shouted to Captain Martin.

"I believe they must be the beggars of the sea," the captain replied. "An order had been issued before I left London that they were not to be supplied with provisions, and they would therefore have had to put out from Dover. This may well enough be them."

An exclamation of alarm broke from the passengers, for the sea beggars were almost as much feared by their own countrymen as by the Spaniards, the latter having spared no pains in spreading tales to their disadvantage. As soon as the ferryman had landed his passengers he rowed boldly out towards the fleet, having nothing of which he could be plundered, and being secretly well disposed towards the beggars. The first ship he hailed was that commanded by William de Blois, Lord of Treslong, who was well known at Brill, where his father had at one time been governor.

His brother had been executed by the Duke of Alva four years before, and he had himself fought by the side of Count Louis of Nassau, brother to the Prince of

Orange, in the campaign that had terminated so disastrously, and though covered with wounds had been one of the few who had escaped from the terrible carnage that followed the defeat at Jemmingen. After that disaster he had taken to the sea, and was one of the most famous of the captains of De la Marck, who had received a commission of admiral from the Prince of Orange.

-“We are starving, Koppelstok; can you inform us how we can get some food? We have picked up two Spanish traders on our way here from Dover, but our larders were emptied before we sailed, and we found but scant supply on board our prizes.”

“There is plenty in the town of Brill,” the ferryman said; “but none that I know of elsewhere. That English brig lying there at anchor may have a few loaves on board.”

“That will not be much,” William de Blois replied, “among five hundred men, still it will be better than nothing. Will you row and ask them if they will sell to us?”

“You had best send a strongly armed crew,” Koppelstok replied. “You know the English are well disposed towards us, and the captain would doubtless give you all the provisions he has to spare; but to do so would be to ruin him with the Spaniards, who might confiscate his ship. It were best that you should make a show of force, so that he could plead that he did but yield to necessity.”

Accordingly a boat with ten men rowed to the brig, Koppelstok accompanying it. The latter climbed on to the deck.

“We mean you no harm, captain,” he said; but the men on board these ships are well-nigh starving. The Sieur de Treslong has given me a purse to pay for all that you can sell us, but thinking that you might be

blamed for having dealings with him by the authorities of the town, he sent these armed men with me in order that if questioned you could reply that they came forcibly on board."

"I will willingly let you have all the provisions I have on board," Captain Martin said; "though these will go but a little way among so many, seeing that I only carry stores sufficient for consumption on board during my voyages."

A cask of salt beef was hoisted up on deck, with a sack of biscuits, four cheeses, and a side of bacon. Captain Martin refused any payment.

"No," he said, "my wife comes from these parts, and my heart is with the patriots. Will you tell *Sieur de Treslong* that Captain Martin of the *Good Venture* is happy to do the best in his power for him and his brave followers?"

On regaining the *Sieur de Treslong's* ship some of the provisions were at once served out among the men, and the rest sent off among other ships, and William de Blois took Koppelstok with him on board the admiral's vessel.

"Well, De Blois, what do you counsel in this extremity?" De la Marck asked.

"I advise," the Lord of Treslong replied, "that we at once send a message to the town demanding its surrender."

"Are you joking or mad, Treslong?" the admiral asked in surprise. "Why, we can scarce muster four hundred men, and the town is well walled and fortified."

"There are no Spanish troops here, admiral, and if we put a bold front on the matter we may frighten the burghers into submission. This man says he would be willing to carry the summons."

"Well, we can try," the admiral said laughing; "it is

clear we must eat, even if we have to fight for it; and hungry as we all are, we do not want to wait."

Treslong gave his ring to Koppelstok to show as his authority, and the fisherman at once rowed ashore. Stating that the beggars of the sea were determined to take the town, he made his way through the crowd of inhabitants who had assembled at the landing-place, and then pushed on to the town-hall, where the magistrates were assembled. He informed them that he had been sent by the Admiral of the Fleet and the Lord of Treslong, who was well known to them, to demand that two commissioners should be sent out to them on behalf of the city to confer with him. The only object of those who sent him was to free the land from the crushing taxes, and to overthrow the tyranny of Alva and the Spaniards. He was asked by the magistrates what force De la Marck had at his disposal, and replied carelessly that he could not say exactly, but that there might be five thousand in all.

This statement completed the dismay that had been caused at the arrival of the fleet. The magistrates agreed that it would be madness to resist, and determined to fly at once. With much difficulty two of them were persuaded to go out to the ship as deputies, and as soon as they set off most of the leading burghers prepared instantly for flight. The deputies on arriving on board were assured that no injury was intended to the citizens or private property, but only the overthrow of Alva's government, and two hours were given them to decide upon the surrender of the town.

During this two hours almost all the inhabitants left the town, taking with them their most valuable property. At the expiration of the time the beggars landed. A few of those remaining in the city made a faint attempt at resistance; but Treslong forced an entrance by the

southern gate, and De la Marck made a bonfire against the northern gate and then battered it down with the end of an old mast. Thus the patriots achieved the capture of the first town, and commenced the long war that was to end only with the establishment of the Free Republic of the Netherlands. No harm was done to such of the inhabitants of the town as remained. The conquerors established themselves in the best of the deserted houses; they then set to work to plunder the churches. The altars and images were all destroyed; the rich furniture, the sacred vessels, and the gorgeous vestments were appropriated to private use. Thirteen unfortunates, among them some priests who had been unable to affect their escape, were seized and put to death by De la Marck.

He had received the strictest orders from the Prince of Orange to respect the ships of all neutral nations, and to behave courteously and kindly to all captives he might take. Neither of these injunctions were obeyed. De la Marck was a wild and sanguinary noble; he had taken a vow upon hearing of the death of his relative, the Prince of Egmont, who had been executed by Alva, that he would neither cut his hair nor his beard until that murder should be revenged, and had sworn to wreak upon Alva and upon Popery the deep vengeance that the nobles and peoples of the Netherlands owed them. This vow he kept to the letter, and his ferocious conduct to all priests and Spaniards who fell into his hands deeply sullied the cause for which he fought.

Upon the day after the capture of the city, the *Good Venture* went into the port. The inhabitants, as soon as they learned that the beggars of the sea respected the life and property of the citizens, returned in large numbers, and trade was soon re-established. Having taken the place, and secured the plunder of the churches and

monasteries, De la Marck would have sailed away upon other excursions had not the Sieur de Treslong pointed out to him the importance of Brill to the cause, and persuaded him to hold the place until he heard from the Prince of Orange.

CHAPTER II

TERRIBLE NEWS

A FEW days after Brill had been so boldly captured, Count Bossu advanced from Utrecht against it. The sea beggars, confident as they were as to their power of meeting the Spaniards on the seas, knew that on dry land they were no match for the well-trained pikemen; they therefore kept within the walls. A carpenter, however, belonging to the town, who had long been a secret partisan of the Prince of Orange, seized an axe, dashed into the water, and swam to the sluice and burst open the gates with a few sturdy blows. The sea poured in and speedily covered the land on the north side of the city.

The Spaniards advanced along the dyke to the southern gate, but the sea beggars had hastily moved most of the cannon on the wall to that point, and received the Spaniards with so hot a fire that they hesitated. In the meantime the Lord of Treslong and another officer had filled two boats with men and rowed out to the ships that had brought the enemy, cut some adrift, and set others on fire. The Spaniards at the southern gate lost heart; they were exposed to a hot fire, which they were unable to return. On one side they saw the water rapidly rising above the level of the dyke on which they stood, on the other they perceived their only means of retreat threatened. They turned, and in desperate haste retreated along the causeway now under water. In their haste many slipped off the road and were drowned, others fell and were smothered in the water, and the rest

succeeded in reaching such of the vessels as were still untouched, and with all speed returned to Utrecht.

From the highest point of the masts to which they could climb, Captain Martin, Ned, and the crew watched the struggle. Ned had begged his father to let him go along the walls to the south gate to see the conflict, but Captain Martin refused. The beggars were victorious and the Spaniards in full flight, and great was the rejoicing in Brill at this check which they had inflicted upon their oppressors.

Bossu, retiring from Brill, took his way towards Rotterdam. He found its gates closed; the authorities refused to submit to his demands or to admit a garrison. They declared they were perfectly loyal, and needed no body of Spanish troops to keep them in order. Bossu requested permission for his troops to pass through the city without halting. This was granted by the magistrates on condition that only a corporal's company should be admitted at a time. Bossu signed an agreement to this effect. But throughout the whole trouble the Spaniards never once respected the conditions they had made and sworn to with the inhabitants, and no sooner were the gates opened than the whole force rushed in, and the usual work of slaughter, atrocity and plunder commenced. Within a few minutes four hundred citizens were murdered, and countless outrages and cruelties perpetrated upon the inhabitants.

Captain Martin completed the discharging of his cargo two days after Bossu made his ineffectual attempt upon the town. A messenger had arrived that morning from Flushing, with news that as soon as the capture of Brill had become known in that seaport, the Seigneur de Herpt had excited the burghers to drive the small Spanish garrison from the town.

Scarcely had they done so when a large reinforcement

of the enemy arrived before the walls, having been despatched there by Alva, to complete the fortress that had been commenced to secure the possession of this important port at the mouth of the Western Scheldt. Herpt persuaded the burghers that it was too late to draw back now. They had done enough to draw the vengeance of the Spaniards upon them; their only hope now was to resist to the last. A half-witted man in the crowd offered, if anyone would give him a pot of beer, to ascend the ramparts and fire two pieces of artillery at the Spanish ships.

The offer was accepted, and the man ran up to the ramparts and discharged the guns. A sudden panic seized the Spaniards, and the whole fleet sailed away at once in the direction of Middelburg.

The governor of the island next day arrived at Flushing and was at once admitted. He called the citizens together to the market-place and there addressed them, beseeching them to return to their allegiance, assuring them that if they did so the king, who was the best natured prince in all Christendom, would forget and forgive their offences. The effect of the governor's oratory was sadly marred by the interruptions of De Herpt and his adherents, who reminded the people of the fate that had befallen other towns that had revolted, and scoffed at such good nature as the king displayed in the scores of executions daily taking place throughout the country.

The governor, finding his efforts unavailing, had left the town, and as soon as he did so the messenger was sent off to Brill, saying that the inhabitants of Flushing were willing to provide arms and ammunition if they would send them men experienced in partisan warfare. Two hundred of the beggars, under the command of Treslong, accordingly started the next day for Flushing. The *Good Venture* threw off her hawsers from the wharf at about

the same time that these were starting, and for some time kept company with them.

"Did one ever see such a wild crew?" Captain Martin said, shaking his head. "Never, I believe, did such a party set out upon a warlike adventure."

The appearance of Treslong's followers was indeed extraordinary. Every man was attired in the gorgeous vestments of the plundered churches—in gold and embroidered cassocks, glittering robes, or the sombre cowls and garments of Capuchin friars. As they sailed along their wild sea-songs rose in the air, mingled with shouts for vengeance on the Spaniards and the Papacy.

"One would not think that this ribald crew could fight," Captain Martin went on; "but there is no doubt they will do so. They must not be blamed altogether; they are half-maddened by the miseries and cruelties endured by their friends and relations at the hands of the Spaniards. The Prince of Orange, as all men know, is one of the most clement and gentle of rulers. All his ordinances enjoin gentle treatment of prisoners, and he has promised every one over and over again complete toleration in the exercise of religion; but though he may forgive and forget, the people will not."

A fresh instance of this was shown a few hours after the *Good Venture* put into Flushing. A ship arrived in port, bringing with it Pacheco, the Duke of Alva's chief engineer, an architect of the highest reputation. He had been despatched by the duke to take charge of the new works that the soldiers had been sent to execute, and ignorant of what had taken place he landed at the port. He was at once seized by the mob. An officer, willing to save his life, took him from their hands and conducted him to the prison; but the populace were clamorous for his blood, and Treslong was willing enough to satisfy them and to avenge upon Alva's favourite officer the

murder of his brother by Alva's orders. The unfortunate officer was therefore condemned to be hung, and the sentence was carried into effect the same day.

A few days later an officer named Zeraerts arrived at Flushing with a commission from the Prince of Orange as Governor of the Island Walcheren. He was attended by a small body of French infantry, and the force under his command speedily increased; for as soon as it was known in England that Brill and Flushing had thrown off the authority of the Spaniards, volunteers from England began to arrive in considerable numbers to aid their fellow-Protestants in the struggle before them.

The *Good Venture* had stayed only a few hours in Flushing. In the present condition of affairs there was no chance of obtaining a cargo there, and Captain Martin therefore thought it better not to waste time, but to proceed at once to England in order to learn the intentions of the merchants for whom he generally worked as to what could be done under the changed state of circumstances that had arisen.

Every day brought news of the extension of the rising. The Spanish troops lay for the most part in Flanders, and effectually deterred the citizens of the Flemish towns from revolting; but throughout Holland, Zeeland, and Friesland the flame of revolt spread rapidly. The news that Brill and Flushing had thrown off the Spanish yoke fired every heart. It was the signal for which all had been so long waiting. Town after town rose, expelled the authorities appointed by Spain and the small Spanish garrisons, and in three months after the rising of Brill the greater part of the maritime provinces were free. Some towns, however, still remained faithful to Spain. Prominent among these was Amsterdam, a great trading city, which feared the ruin that opposition to Alva might bring upon it.

On the 23rd of May, Louis of Nassau, with a body of troops from France, captured the important town of Mons by surprise, but was at once beleaguered there by a Spanish army. In June the States of Holland assembled at Dort and formally renounced the authority of the Duke of Alva, and declared the Prince of Orange, the royally-appointed stadtholder, the only legal representative of the Spanish crown in their country; and in reply to an eloquent address of Sainte Aldegonde, the prince's representative, voted a considerable sum of money for the payment of the army the prince was raising in Germany. On the 19th of June a serious misfortune befell the patriot cause. A reinforcement of Huguenot troops, on the way to succour the garrison of Mons, were met and cut to pieces by the Spaniards, and Count Louis, who had been led by the French King to expect ample succour and assistance from him, was left to his fate.

On the 7th July the Prince of Orange crossed the Rhine with 14,000 foot and 7,000 horse. He advanced but a short distance when the troops mutinied in consequence of their pay being in arrears, and he was detained four weeks until the cities of Holland guaranteed their payment for three months. A few cities opened their gates to him; but they were for the most part unimportant places, and Mechlin was the only large town that admitted his troops. Still he pressed on towards Mons, expecting daily to be joined by 12,000 French infantry and 3,000 cavalry under the command of Admiral Coligny.

The prince, who seldom permitted himself to be sanguine, believed that the goal of his hopes was reached, and that he should now be able to drive the Spaniards from the Netherlands. But as he was marching forward he received tidings that showed him that all his plans were shattered, and that the prospects were darker than

they had ever before been. While the King of France had throughout been encouraging the revolted Netherlanders, and had authorised his minister to march with an army to their assistance, he was preparing for a deed that would be the blackest in history, were it not that its horrors are less appalling than those inflicted upon the captured cities of the Netherlands by Alva. On St. Bartholomew's Eve there was a general massacre of the Protestants in Paris, followed by similar massacres throughout France, the number of victims being variously estimated at from twenty-five to a hundred thousand.

Protestant Europe was filled with horror at this terrible crime. Philip of Spain was filled with equal delight. Not only was the danger that seemed to threaten him in the Netherlands at once and for ever, as he believed, at an end, but he saw in this destruction of the Protestants of France a great step in the direction he had so much at heart—the entire extirpation of heretics throughout Europe. He wrote letters of the warmest congratulation to the King of France, with whom he had formerly been at enmity; while the Pope, accompanied by his cardinals, went to the church of St. Mark to render thanks to God for the grace thus singularly vouchsafed to the Holy See and to all Christendom.

To the Prince of Orange the news came as a thunder-clap. His troops wholly lost heart, and refused to keep the field. The prince himself almost lost his life at the hands of the mutineers, and at last, crossing the Rhine, he disbanded his army and went almost alone to Holland to share the fate of the provinces that adhered to him. He went there expecting and prepared to die. "The Lord will make my sepulchre," was his expression in the letter in which he announced his intention to his brother. Count Louis of Nassau had now nothing left

before him but to surrender. His soldiers, almost entirely French, refused any longer to resist, now that the king had changed his intentions, and the city was surrendered, the garrison being allowed to retire with their weapons.

The terms of the capitulation were so far respected; but instead of the terms respecting the townspeople being adhered to, a council of blood was set up, and for many months from ten to twenty of the inhabitants were hanged, burned, or beheaded every day. The news of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, of the treachery of the King of France towards the inhabitants of the Netherlands, and of the horrible cruelties perpetrated upon the inhabitants of Mechlin and other towns that had opened their gates to the Prince of Orange, excited the most intense indignation among the people of England.

The queen put on mourning, but was no more inclined than before to render any really efficient aid to the Netherlands. She allowed volunteers to pass over, furnished some meagre sums of money, but held aloof from any open participation in the war; for if before, when France was supposed to be favourable to the Netherlands and hostile to Spain, she felt unequal to a war with the latter power, still less could she hope to cope with Spain when the deed of St. Bartholomew had reunited the two Catholic monarchs.

Captain Martin, married to a native of the Netherlands, and mixing constantly with the people in his trade, was naturally ardent. even beyond the majority of his countrymen, in their cause, and over and over again declared that were he sailing by when a sea-fight was going on between the Dutch and the Spaniards, he would pull down his English flag, hoist that of Holland, and join in the fray; and Ned, as was to be expected, shared to the utmost his father's feelings on the subject.

Early in September the *Good Venture* started with a cargo for Amsterdam, a city that almost alone in Holland adhered to the Spanish cause.

Sophie Martin was pleased when she heard that this was the ship's destination; for she was very anxious as to the safety of her father and brothers, from whom she had not heard for a long time. Postage was dear and mails irregular. Few letters were written or received by people in England, still more seldom letters sent across the sea. There would, therefore, under the ordinary circumstances, have been no cause whatever for uneasiness had years elapsed without news coming from Amsterdam; and, indeed, during her whole married life Sophie Martin had only received one or two letters by post from her former home, although many communications had been brought by friends of her husband's trading there. But as many weeks seldom passed without the *Good Venture* herself going into Amsterdam, for that town was one of the great trading centres of Holland, there was small occasion for letters to pass. It happened, however, that from one cause or another, eighteen months had passed since Captain Martin's business had taken him to that port, and no letter had come either by post or hand during that time.

None who had friends in the Netherlands could feel assured that these must, either from their station or qualities, be safe from the storm that was sweeping over the country. The poor equally with the rich, the artisan equally with the noble, was liable to become a victim of Alva's Council of Blood. The net was drawn so as to catch all classes and conditions; and although it was upon the Protestants that his fury chiefly fell, the Catholics suffered too, for pretexts were always at hand upon which these could also be condemned.

When the vessel sailed Sophie Martin gave her

husband a letter to her father and brothers, begging them to follow the example of thousands of their countrymen, and to leave the land where life and property were no longer safe, and to come over to London.

"I feel anxious, Ned," Captain Martin said as he sailed up the Zuider-Zee towards the city, "as to what has befallen your grandfather and uncles. I have always made the best of the matter to your mother, but I cannot conceal from myself that harm may have befallen them. It is strange that no message has come to us through any of our friends trading with the town, for your uncles know many of my comrades and can see their names in the shipping lists when they arrive. I sorely fear that something must have happened. Your uncles are prudent men, going about their work and interfering with none; but they are men, too, who speak their mind, and would not, like many, make a false show of affection when they feel none.

"Well, well; we shall soon know. As soon as the ship is moored and my papers are declared in order, you and I will go over to Vordwyk and see how they are faring. I think not that they will follow your mother's advice and sail over with us; for it was but the last time I saw them that they spoke bitterly against the emigrants, and said that every man who could bear arms should, however great his danger, wait and bide the time until there was a chance to strike for his religion and country. They are sturdy men these Dutchmen, and not readily turned from an opinion they have taken up; and although I shall do my best to back up your mother's letter by my arguments, I have small hope that I shall prevail with them."

In the evening they were moored alongside the quays of Amsterdam, at that time one of the busiest cities in Europe. Its trade was great, the wealth of its citizens immense. It contained a large number of monasteries, its

authorities were all Catholics and devoted to the cause of Spain, and although there were a great many well-wishers to the cause of freedom within its walls, these were powerless to take action, and the movement which, after the captures of Brill and Flushing, had caused almost all the towns of Holland to declare for the Prince of Orange, found no echo in Amsterdam. The vessel anchored outside the port, and the next morning after their papers were examined and found in order she ranged up alongside the crowded tiers of shipping. Captain Martin went on shore with Ned, visited the merchants to whom his cargo was consigned, and told them that he should begin to unload the next day.

He then started with Ned to walk to Vordwyk, which lay two miles away. On reaching the village they stopped suddenly. The roof of the house they had so often visited was gone, its walls blackened by fire. After the first exclamation of surprise and regret they walked forward until opposite the ruin, and stood gazing at it. Then Captain Martin stepped up to a villager who was standing at the door of his shop, and asked him when did this happen, what had become of the old man Plomaert?

"You are his son-in-law, are you not?" the man asked in reply. "I have seen you here at various times." Captain Martin nodded. The man looked round cautiously to see that none were within sound of his voice.

"You have not heard, then?" he said. "It was a terrible business, though we are growing used to it now. One day, it is some eight months since, a party of soldiers came from Amsterdam and hauled away my neighbour Plomaert and his three sons. They were denounced as having attended the field preaching a year ago, and you know what that means."

"And the villains murdered them?" Captain Martin asked in horror-stricken tones.

The man nodded. "They were hung together next day, together with Gertrude, the wife of the eldest brother. Johan was, as you know, unmarried. Elizabeth, the wife of Louis, lay ill at the time, or doubtless she would have fared the same as the rest. She has gone with her two daughters to Haarlem, where her family live. All their property was, of course, seized and confiscated, and the house burnt down; for, as you know, they all lived together. Now, my friend, I will leave you. I dare not ask you in for I know not who may be watching us, and to entertain even the brother-in-law of men who have been sent to the gallows might well cost a man his life in our days."

Then Captain Martin's grief and passion found vent in words, and he roundly cursed the Spaniards and their works, regardless of who might hear him; then he entered the garden, visited the summer-house where he had so often talked with the old man and his sons, and then sat down and gave full vent to his grief. Ned felt almost stunned by the news. The shock caused by the sight of the ruined house, and the news that his grandfather, his three uncles, and one of his aunts had been murdered by the Spaniards, completely overwhelmed him.

"Let us be going, Ned," his father said at last; "there is nothing for us to do here, let us get back to our ship. I am a peaceable man, Ned, but I feel now as if I could join the beggars of the sea, and go with them in slaying every Spaniard who fell into their hands. This will be terrible news for your mother, lad."

"It will indeed," Ned replied. "Oh, father, I wish you would let me stay here and join the prince's bands and fight for their freedom. There were English volunteers coming out to Brill and Flushing when we sailed from the Thames, and if they come to fight for Holland who

have no tie in blood, why should not I who am Dutch by my mother's side and whose relations have been murdered?"

"We will talk of it later on, Ned," his father said. "You are young yet for such rough work as this, and this is no common war. There is no quarter given here, it is a fight to the death. The Spaniards slaughter the Protestants like wild beasts, and like wild beasts they will defend themselves. But if this war goes on till you have gained your full strength and sinew I will not say you nay. As you say, our people at home are ready to embark in a war for the cause of liberty and religion, did the queen but give the word; and when others, fired solely by horror at the Spaniards' cruelty, are ready to come over here and throw in their lot with them, it seems to me that it will be but right that you, who are half Dutch and have had relatives murdered by these fiends, should come over and side with the oppressed. If there is fighting at sea, it may be that I myself will take part with them, and place the *Good Venture* at the service of the Prince of Orange. But of that we will talk later on, as also about yourself. When you are eighteen you will still be full young for such work."

As they talked they were walking fast towards Amsterdam. Entering the gate of the town they made their way straight down to the port, and were soon on board the *Good Venture*.

The next morning the work of unloading began. The sailors worked hard; for, as one of them said, "This place seems to smell of blood—let's be out of it, mates, as soon as we can." At four in the afternoon a lad of about Ned's age came on board. He was the son of the merchant to whom the larger part of the cargo of the *Good Venture* was consigned.

"I have a letter that my father charged me to give into

your hands, Captain Martin. He said that the matter was urgent, and begged me to give it you in your cabin. He also told me to ask when you think your hold will be empty, as he has goods for you for the return voyage."

"We shall be well-nigh empty by tomorrow night," Captain Martin said, as he led the way to his cabin in the poop. "The men have been working faster than usual, for it generally takes us three days to unload."

"I do not think my father cared about that," the lad said when he entered the cabin; "it was but an excuse for my coming down here, and he gave me the message before all the other clerks. But methinks that the letter is the real object of my coming."

Captain Martin opened the letter. Thanks to his preparation for taking his place in his father's business, he had learnt to read and write; accomplishments by no means general among sea-captains of the time.

"It is important, indeed," he said, as he glanced through the letter. It ran as follows: "Captain Martin, —A friend of mine, who is one of the council here, has just told me that at the meeting this afternoon a denunciation was laid against you for having publicly, in the street of Vordwyk, cursed and abused his Majesty the King of Spain, the Duke of Alva, the Spaniards, and the Catholic religion. Some were of opinion that you should at once be arrested on board your ship, but others thought that it were better to wait and seize you the first time you came on shore, as it might cause trouble were you taken from under the protection of the British flag. On shore, they urged, no question could arise, especially as many English have now, although the two nations are at peace, openly taken service under the Prince of Orange.

"I have sent to tell you this, though at no small risk to myself were it discovered that I had done so; but as we

have had dealings for many years together, I think it right to warn you. I may say that the counsel of those who were for waiting prevailed; but if, after a day or two, they find that you do not come ashore, I fear they will not hesitate to arrest you on your own vessel. Please to destroy this letter at once after you have read it, and act as seems best to you under the circumstances. I send this to you by my son's hand, for there are spies everywhere, and in these days one can trust no one."

"I am much obliged to you, young sir, for bringing me this letter. Will you thank your father from me, and say that I feel deeply indebted to him, and will think over how I can best escape from this strait. Give him the message from me before others, that I shall be empty and ready to receive goods by noon on the day after tomorrow."

When the lad had left, Captain Martin called in Ned and William Peters, his first mate, and laid the case before them.

"It is an awkward business, Captain Martin," Peters said. "You shan't be arrested on board the *Good Venture*, as long as there is a man on board can wield a cutlass; but I don't know whether that would help you in the long run."

"Not at all, Peters. We might beat off the first party that came to take me, but it would not be long before they brought up a force against which we should stand no chance whatever. No, it is not by fighting that there is any chance of escape. It is evident by this that I am safe for tomorrow; they will wait at least a day to see if I go ashore, which indeed they will make certain I shall do sooner or later. As far as my own safety is concerned, and that of Ned here, who, as he was with me, is doubtless included in the denunciation, it is easy enough. We have only to get into the boat after dark, to muffle the oars,

and to row for Haarlem, which lies but ten miles away, and has declared for the Prince of Orange. But I do not like to leave the ship, for if they found us gone they might seize and declare it confiscated. And although, when we got back to England, we might lay a complaint before the queen, there would be no chance of our getting the ship or her value from the Spaniards. There are so many causes of complaint between the two nations, that the seizure of a brig would make no difference one way or another. The question is, could we get her out?"

"It would be no easy matter," Peters said, shaking his head. "That French ship that came in this afternoon has taken up a berth outside us, and there would be no getting out until she moved out of the way. If she were not there it might be tried, though it would be difficult to do so without attracting attention. As for the Spanish war vessels, of which there are four in the port, I should not fear them if we once got our sails up, for the *Venture* can sail faster than these lubberly Spaniards; but they would send row-boats after us, and unless the wind was strong these would speedily overhaul us."

"Well, I must think it over," Captain Martin said. "I should be sorry indeed to lose my ship, which would be well-nigh ruin to me, but if there is no other way we must make for Haarlem by boat."

The next day the work of unloading continued. In the afternoon the captain of the French ship lying outside them came on board. He had been in the habit of trading with Holland, and addressed Captain Martin in Dutch.

"Are you likely to be lying here long?" he asked. "I want to get my vessel alongside the wharf as soon as I can, for it is slow work unloading into these lighters. There are one or two ships going out in the morning, but I would rather have got in somewhere about this point if

I could, for the warehouses of Mynheer Strous, to whom my goods are consigned, lie just opposite."

"Will you come down into my cabin and have a glass of wine with me," Captain Martin said, "and then we can talk it over?"

Captain Martin discovered, without much trouble, that the French captain was a Huguenot, and that his sympathies were all with the people of the Netherlands.

"Now," he said, "I can speak freely to you. I was ashore the day before yesterday, and learnt that my wife's father, her three brothers, and one of their wives have been murdered by the Spaniards. Well, you can understand that in my grief and rage I cursed the Spaniards and their doings. I have learnt that some spy has denounced me, and that they are only waiting for me to set foot on shore to arrest me, and you know what will come after that; for at present, owing to the volunteers that have come over to Brill and Flushing, the Spaniards are furious against the English. They would rather take me on shore than on board, but if they find that I do not land they will certainly come on board for me. They believe that I shall not be unloaded until noon tomorrow, and doubtlessly expect that as soon as the cargo is out I shall land to arrange for a freight to England. Therefore, until tomorrow afternoon I am safe, but no longer. Now, I am thinking of trying to get out quietly tonight; but to do so it is necessary that you should shift your berth a ship's length one way or the other. Will you do this for me?"

"Certainly I will, with pleasure," the captain replied. "I will give orders at once."

"No: that would never do," Captain Martin said. "They are all the more easy about me because they know that as long as your ship is there I cannot get out, but if they saw you shifting your berth it would strike them at

once that I might be intending to slip away. You must wait until it gets perfectly dark, and then throw off your warps and slacken out your cable as silently as possible, and let her drop down so as to leave me an easy passage. As soon as it is dark I will grease all my blocks, and when everything is quiet try to get her out. What wind there is is from the south-west, which will take us well down the Zuider-Zee."

CHAPTER III

A FIGHT WITH THE SPANIARDS

As soon as it became dark, and the wharves were deserted. Captain Martin sent two sailors aloft with grease pots, with orders that every block was to be carefully greased to ensure its running without noise. A boat which rowed six oars was lowered noiselessly into the water, and flannel was bound round the oars. The men, who had been made aware of the danger that threatened their captain, sharpened the pikes and axes, and declared to each other that whether the captain ordered it or not no Spaniard should set foot on board as long as one of them stood alive on the decks. The cook filled a great boiler with water and lighted a fire under it, and the carpenter heated a caldron of pitch without orders.

"What are you doing, Thompson?" the captain asked, noticing the glow of the fire as he came out of his cabin.

The sailor came aft before he replied, "I am just cooking up a little hot sauce for the dons, captain. We don't ask them to come, you know; but if they do, it's only right that we should entertain them."

"I hope there will be no fighting, lad," the captain said.

"Well, your honour, that ain't exactly the wish of me and my mates. After what we have been hearing of, we feel as we shan't be happy until we have had a brush with them 'ere Spaniards. And as to fighting, your honour; from what we have heard, Captain Hawkins and others out in the Indian seas have been a-showing them that though they may swagger on land they ain't no

match for an Englishman on the sea. Anyhow, your honour, we ain't going to stand by and see you and Master Ned carried away by these 'ere butchering Spaniards. We have all made up our minds that what happens to you happens to all of us. We've sailed together in this ship the *Good Venture* for the last seventeen or eighteen years, and we means to swim or sink together."

The night was dark, and the two or three oil lamps that hung from some of the houses facing the port threw no ray of light which extended to the shipping. It was difficult to make out against the sky the outline of the masts of the French vessel lying some twenty yards away; but presently Ned's attention was called towards her by a slight splash of her cable. Then he heard the low rumble as the ropes ran out through the hawse-holes, and saw that the masts were slowly moving. In two or three minutes they had disappeared from his sight. He went into the cabin.

"The Frenchman has gone, father; and so noiselessly that I could hardly hear her. If we can get out as quietly there is little fear of our being noticed."

"We cannot be as quiet as that, Ned. She has only to slack away her cables and drift with the tide that turned half an hour ago, we have got to tow out and set sail. However, the night is dark, the wind is off shore, and everything is in our favour."

The sailors were all ready. All were barefooted so as to move as noiselessly as possible. The four small cannon that the *Good Venture* carried had been loaded to the muzzle with bullets and pieces of iron. A search had been made below, and several heavy lumps of stone, a part of the ballast carried on some former occasion, brought up and placed at intervals along the bulwarks. The pikes had been fastened by a loose lashing to the mast, and the axes leaned in readiness against the cannon.

"Now, Peters," Captain Martin said, "let the boat be manned. Do you send a man ashore to cast off the hawser at the bow. Let him take a line ashore with him so as to ease the hawser off, and not let the end fall in the water. The moment he has done that let him come to the stern and get on board there, and do you and he get the plank on board as noiselessly as you can. As soon as the bow-hawser is on board I will give the men in the boat the word to row. Ned will be on board her, and see that they row in the right direction. The moment you have got the plank in get out your knife and cut the stern warp half through, and directly her head is out, and you feel the strain, sever it. The stern is so close to the wharf that the end will not be able to drop down into the water and make a splash."

Ned's orders were that as soon as the vessel's head pointed seawards he was to steer rather to the right, so as to prevent the stream, which, however, ran but feebly, from carrying her down on to the bows of the French ship. Once beyond the latter he was to go straight out, steering by the lights on shore. The men were enjoined to drop their oars as quietly as possible into the water at each stroke, and to row deeply, as having the vessel in tow they would churn up the water unless they did so. The boat rowed off a stroke or two, and then, as the rope tightened, the men sat quiet until Captain Martin was heard to give the order to row in a low tone; then they bent to their oars. Peters had chosen the six best rowers on board the ship for the purpose, and so quietly did they dip their oars in the water that Captain Martin could scarce hear the sound, and only knew by looking over the other side, and seeing that the shore was receding, that the ship was in motion. Two minutes later Peters came forward.

"I have cut the warp, Captain Martin, and she is

moving out. I have left Watson at the helm." Scarce a word was spoken for the next five minutes. It was only by looking at the lights ashore that they could judge the progress they were making. Every one breathed more freely now the first danger was over. They had got out from their berth without attracting the slightest notice, either from the shore or from the ships lying next to them.

Another quarter of an hour passed, and Captain Martin thought that they must now be beyond the line of the outer shipping. They felt the wind more now that they were getting beyond the shelter of the town, and its effect upon the hull and spars made the work lighter for those in the boat ahead.

"Now, Peters, I think that we can safely spread the foresail and call them in from the boat."

The sail had been already loosed and was now let fall; it bellied out at once.

"Haul in the sheets, lads," Captain Martin said, and going forward gave a low whistle. A minute later the boat was alongside. "Let her drop astern, Peters," the captain said, as Ned and the rowers clambered on board; "we may want her presently. Hullo! what's that? It's one of the guard-boats, I do believe, and coming this way." The men heard the sound of coming oars, and silently stole to the mast and armed themselves with the pikes, put the axes in their belts, and ranged themselves along by the side of the ship towards which the boat was approaching.

There was dead silence in the ship as the boat approached. She was just passing the stern at the distance of about a ship's length, when there was a sudden exclamation, and a voice shouted, "What ship is that? Where are you going?" Captain Martin replied in Dutch, "We are taking advantage of the wind to make to sea."

"Down with that sail, sir!" the officer shouted; "this is against all regulations. No ship is permitted to leave the port between sunrise and sunset. Pull alongside, lads; there is something strange about this!"

"Do not come alongside," Captain Martin said sternly. "We are peaceable traders who meddle with no one, but if you interfere with us it will be the worse for you."

"You insolent hound!" the officer exclaimed furiously, "do you dare to threaten me. Blow your matches, lads, and shoulder your arquebuses. There is treason and rebellion here."

Those on board saw six tiny sparks appear, two in the bow and four in the stern. A minute later the boat dashed alongside, As it did so three great pieces of stone were cast into it, knocking down two of the rowers.

"Fire!" the officer exclaimed as he sprang up to climb the ship's side. The six muskets were discharged, and the men rose to follow their leader, when there was a cry from the rowers "The boat is sinking! She is staved in!"

At the same moment the officer fell back thrust through with a pike. Two of the soldiers were cut down with axes, the others sprang back into the sinking boat, which at once drifted astern.

"Up with her sails, lads!" Captain Martin shouted; "it is a question of speed now. The alarm is spread on shore already." The sentries on the various batteries were discharging their muskets and shouting, and the roll of a drum was heard almost immediately. The crew soon had every patch of sail set upon the brig. She was moving steadily through the water; but the wind was still light, although occasionally a stronger puff gave ground for hope that it would ere long blow harder.

"They will be some time before they make out what it is all about, Peters," Captain Martin said. "The galleys will be manned, and will row to the spot where the firing was heard. Some of the men in the boat are sure to be able to swim, and will meet them as they come out and tell them what has happened. The worse of it is, the moon will be up in a few minutes. However, we have got a good start. One or two guard-boats may be out here in a quarter of an hour, but it will take the galleys twice as long to gather their crews and get out. It all depends on the wind. It is lucky it is not light yet, or the batteries might open on us; I don't think now they will get sight of us until we are fairly out of range."

A quarter of an hour after the shattered boat had dropped astern the moon rose on the starboard-bow. It was three-quarters full, and would assuredly reveal the ship to those on shore. Scarcely indeed did it show above the horizon when there was a boom of a gun astern, followed a second or two later by a heavy splash in the water close alongside.

"That was a good shot," Captain Martin said; "but luck rather than skill I fancy. There is little chance of their hitting us at this distance. We must be a mile and a half away."

Four or five more shots were fired, but they all fell astern; and as they were fully two miles and a half away when the last gun was discharged, and the cannoners must have known that they were far out of range, Captain Martin felt sure that the cannon had been discharged rather as a signal to ships out at sea than with any hope of reaching them.

"Ned, run up into the foretop," the captain said, "and keep a sharp look-out ahead."

Peters had been looking astern when the last gun was fired, and said that by its flash he believed that he had

caught sight of three craft of some kind or other outside the ships moored off the port.

"Then we have two miles' start if those are their galleys," the captain said. "We are stealing through the water at about the rate of four knots, and perhaps they may row six, so it will take them an hour to come up. You had better get two of the guns astern, so as to fire down into them as they come up. You may leave the others, one on each side, for the present, and run one of them over when we see which side they are making for."

As the moon rose they were able to make out three craft astern of them. Two were almost abreast of each other, the third some little distance behind.

"They are about a mile astern now, Peters, and unless the wind freshens up a bit they will be alongside in about twenty minutes."

Just at this moment Ned hailed them from the top. "There is a ship nearly ahead of us, sir; she is lying with her sails brailed up, evidently waiting."

"How far is she off, do you think, Ned?"

"I should say she is four miles away," Ned replied.

"Well we need not trouble about her for the present; there will be time to think about her when we have finished with these fellows behind. You can come down now, Ned."

In a few words the captain now explained his intentions to his men.

"Ned, you will be in charge in the waist until I rejoin you. Get ready to run one of the guns over the instant I tell you on which side they are coming up."

Captain Martin again ascended to the poop and joined Peters. The two boats were now but a few hundred yards astern, and they could hear the officers cheering on the rowers to exert themselves to the utmost. The third boat

was fully a quarter of a mile behind the leaders. When they approached within a hundred yards a fire of musketry was opened.

"Lie down under the bulwarks, men," Captain Martin said to the three sailors. "It is no use risking your lives unnecessarily. I expect one boat will come one side and one the other, Peters. If they do we will both take the one coming up on the port side. One of us may miss, and it is better to make sure of one boat if we can. I think we can make pretty sure of beating off the other. Yes, there they are separating. Now work your gun round a bit, so that it bears on a point about twenty yards astern and a boat's length on the port side."

The bulwarks round the poop were only about a foot high, but sitting back from them the captain and the mate were protected from the bullets that were now singing briskly over the stern of the ship.

The boat came racing along until, when within some twenty yards of the stern, the cannons were discharged almost simultaneously. The sound was succeeded by a chorus of screams and yells; the contents of both guns had struck the boat fairly midships, and she sank almost instantly. As soon as they had fired Captain Martin ran forward and joined the crew in the waist. He had already passed the word to Ned to get both guns over to the starboard side, and he at once took charge of one while Ned stood at the other. The Spaniards had pushed straight on without waiting to pick up their drowning comrades in the other boat, and in a minute were alongside. So close did the helmsman bring the boat to the side that the guns could not be depressed so as to bear upon her, and a moment later the Spaniards were climbing up the sides of the vessel, the rowers dropping their oars and seizing axes to join the climbing soldiers.

"Never mind the gun, Ned; it is useless at present. Now, lads, drive them back as they come up."

With pike and hatchet the sailors met the Spaniards as they tried to climb up. The cook had brought his caldron of boiling water to the bulwarks, and threw pailful after pailful down into the boat, while the carpenter bailed over boiling pitch with the great ladle. Terrible yells and screams rose from the boat, and the soldiers in vain tried to gain a footing upon the ship's deck. As they appeared above the level of the bulwarks they were met either with thrust of pike or with a crashing blow from an axe, and it was but three or four minutes from the moment that the fight began that the boat cast off and dropped behind, more than half those on board being either killed or disabled. A loud cheer broke from the crew.

"Shall I run the guns back to the stern again," Peters asked from above, "and give them a parting dose?"

"No, no," Captain Martin said, "let them go, Peters; we are fighting to defend ourselves, and have done them mischief enough. See what the third boat is doing, though."

"They have stopped rowing," Peters said, after going to the stern. "I think they are picking up some swimmers from the boat we sank. There cannot be many of them, for most of the rowers would have been killed by our discharges, and the soldiers in their armour will have sunk at once."

Captain Martin now ascended to the poop. In a short time the boat joined that which had dropped astern, which was lying helplessly in the water, no attempt having been made to man the oars, as most of the unwounded men were scalded more or less severely. Their report was evidently not encouraging, and the third boat made no attempt to pursue. Some of her

oarsmen were shifted to the other boat, and together they turned and made back for Amsterdam.

"Now then for this vessel ahead," Captain Martin said, "that is a much more serious business than the boats."

The vessel, which was some two miles ahead of them, had now set some of her sails, and was heading towards them.

"They can make us out now plainly enough, Peters. I don't think that there is any getting away from them."

"I don't see that there is," the mate agreed. "Which-ever way we edged off they could cut us off. The worst of it is, no doubt she has got some big guns on board, and these little things of ours are of no good except at close quarters. It would be no use trying to make a running fight with her?"

"Not in the least, Peters. We had better sail straight at her."

"You don't mean to try and carry her by boarding?" Peters asked doubtfully. "She looks a large ship, and has perhaps a hundred and fifty men on board."

"That is so, Peters. What I think of doing is to bear straight down upon her as if I intended to board. We shall have to stand one broadside as we come up, and then we shall be past her, and with our light draught we should run right away from her with this wind. There is more of it than there was, and we are slipping away fast. Unless she happens to knock away one of our masts we shall get away from her."

When they were within half a mile of the Spanish ship they saw her bows bear off.

"Lie down, lads," the captain ordered, "she is going to give us a broadside. When it is over start one of those sea-beggar songs you picked up at Brill; that will startle them, and they will think we are crowded with men and going to board them."

A minute later eight flashes of fire burst from the Spanish ship, now lying broadside to them. One shot crashed through the bulwarks, two others passed through the sails, the rest went wide of their marks. As soon as it was over the crew leapt to their feet and burst into one of the wild songs sung by the sea beggars.

"Keep our head straight towards her, Peters," Captain Martin said. "They will think we mean to run her down, and it will flurry and confuse them."

Loading was not quick work in those days, and the distance between the vessels was decreased by half before the guns were again fired. This time it was not a broadside; the guns went off one by one as they were loaded, and the aim was hasty and inaccurate, for close as they were, not a shot struck the hull of the *Good Venture*, though two or three went through the sails. In the bright moonlight men could be seen running about and officers waving their arms and giving orders on board the Spaniard, and then her head began to pay off.

"We have scared them," Captain Martin laughed. "They thought we were going to run them down. They know the sea beggars would be quite content to sink themselves if they could sink an enemy. Follow close in her wake, Peters, and then bear off a little as if you meant to pass them on their starboard side; then when you get close give her the helm sharp and sweep across her stern. We will give her the guns as we pass, then bear off again and pass her on her port side; the chances are they will not have loaded again there."

The Spanish ship was little more than a hundred yards ahead. When she got before the wind again Captain Martin saw with satisfaction that the *Good Venture* sailed three feet to her two. The poop and stern galleries of the Spaniard were clustered with soldiers, who opened a fire with their muskets upon their pursuer. The men

were all lying down now at their guns, which were loaded with musket balls to their muzzles.

"Elevate them as much as you can. She is much higher out of the water than we are. Now, Peters, you see to the guns, I will take the helm."

"I will keep the helm, sir," the mate replied.

"No you won't, Peters; my place is the place of danger. But if you like you can lie under the bulwark there after you have fired, and be ready to take my place if you see me drop. Now, lads, get ready."

So saying the captain put down the tiller. The *Good Venture* swept round under the stern of the Spaniard at a distance of some forty yards, and as she did so the guns loaded with bullets to the muzzle were fired one after the other. The effect was terrible, and the galleries and poop were swept by the leaden shower. Then the captain straightened the helm again. The crew burst into the wild yells and cries the beggars raised when going into battle. The Spaniards, confused by the terrible slaughter worked by the guns of their enemies, and believing that they were about to be boarded on the port side by a crowd of desperate foemen, hastily put up the tiller, and the ship bore away as the *Good Venture* swept up, presenting her stern instead of her broadside to them.

To the momentary relief of the Spaniards their assailant instead of imitating their manœuvres kept straight upon her course before the wind, and instead of the wild cries of the beggars a hearty English cheer was raised. As Captain Martin had expected, the guns on the port side had not been reloaded after the last discharge, and the *Good Venture* was two or three hundred yards away before the Spaniards awoke to the fact that they had been tricked.

A dozen contradictory orders were shouted as soon as

the truth dawned upon them. The captain had been killed by the discharge of grape, and the first lieutenant severely wounded. The officer in command of the troops shouted to his men to load the guns, only to find when this was accomplished that the second lieutenant of the ship had turned her head in pursuit of the enemy, and that not a single gun would bear. There was a sharp altercation between the two authorities, but the military chief was of the highest rank.

"Don't you see," he said furiously, "that she is going away from us every foot? She was but a couple of hundred yards away when I gave the order to load, and now she is fully a quarter of a mile."

"If I put the helm down to bring her broadside on," the seaman said, "she will be half a mile ahead before we can straighten up and get in her wake again; and unless you happen to cripple her she will get away to a certainty."

"She will get away anyhow," the soldier roared, "if we don't cripple her. Put your helm down instantly."

The order was given and the ship's head swayed round. There was a flapping of sails and a rattling of blocks, and then a broadside was fired; but it is no easy matter for angry and excited men to hit a mast at the distance of nearly half a mile. One of the shots ploughed up the deck within a yard of the foot of the mainmast, another splintered a boat, three others added to the holes in the sails, but no damage of importance was done. By the time the Spaniard had borne round and was again in chase, the *Good Venture* was over half a mile ahead.

"It is all over now, captain," Peters said as he went aft. "Unless we light upon another of these fellows, which is not likely, we are safe."

"Are any of the men hit, Peters?"

"The carpenter was knocked down and stunned by a splinter from the boat, sir; but I don't think it is serious."

"Thank God for that," the captain said. "Now, will you take the helm?" There was something in the voice that startled the mate.

"Is anything the matter, sir? Don't say you have been hit."

"I am hit, Peters, and I fear rather badly; but that matters little now that the crew and ship are safe."

Peters caught the captain, for he saw that he could scarce stand, and called two men to his assistance. The captain was laid down on the deck.

"Where are you hit, sir?"

"Half-way between the knee and the hip," Captain Martin replied faintly. "If it hadn't been for the tiller I should have fallen, but with the aid of that I made shift to stand on the other leg. It was just before we fired, at the moment when I put the helm down."

By Peters' directions a mattress was now brought up, and the captain carried down to his cabin. There was no thought on board now of the pursuers astern, or of possible danger lying ahead. The news that Captain Martin was badly wounded damped all the feelings of triumph and enthusiasm which the crew had before been feeling at the success with which they had eluded the Spaniard while heavily punishing her. As soon as the captain was laid on a sofa Peters examined the wound. It was right in front of the leg, some four inches above the knee.

"There is nothing to be done for it," Captain Martin said. "It has smashed the bone, I am sure."

"I am afraid it has, captain," Peters said ruefully; "and it is no use my saying that it has not. I think, sir, we had best put in at Enkhuizen. We are not above four or five

miles from it now, and we shall find surgeons there who will do all they can for you."

"I think that will be the best plan, Peters."

The orders were given at once, and the ship's course altered, and half an hour later the lights of Enkhuizen were seen ahead.

CHAPTER IV

WOUNDED

THEY dropped anchor a short distance off the port, and then lit some torches and waved them.

"The firing is sure to have been heard," Peters said, "and they will be sending off to know what is going on, otherwise there would have been small chance of getting in tonight."

As the mate anticipated, the sound of oars was soon heard, and a large boat rowed out towards them. It stopped at a distance of a hundred yards, and there was a shout of "What ship is that?"

"The English brig *Good Venture*. We pray you to allow us to bring our captain, who has been sorely wounded by the Spaniards, on shore."

"What has been the firing we have heard? We could see the flashes across the water."

"We have been twice engaged," Peters shouted; "first with two Spanish galleys, and then with a large ship of war, which we beat off with heavy loss."

"Well done, Englishmen!" the voice exclaimed, and the boat at once rowed out to the brig. "You cannot come in tonight," the Dutch official said, "for the chain is up across the harbour, and the rule is imperative and without exception: but I will gladly take your captain on shore, and he shall have, I promise you, the best surgical aid the town can give him. Is he the only one hurt?"

"One of the men has been injured with a splinter, but he needs but bandaging and laying up for a few days. We have had a shot or two through our bulwarks, and the

sails are riddled. The captain's son is below with him; he acts as second mate, and will tell you all about this affair into which we were forced."

"Very well; we will take him ashore with us then. There is quite an excitement there. The news that a sea-fight was going on brought all the citizens to the walls."

The mattress upon which Captain Martin was lying was brought out and lowered carefully into the stern of the boat. Ned took his seat beside it, and the boat pushed off. Having passed the forts they entered the port and rowed to the landing-place. A number of citizens, many of them carrying torches, were assembled here. "What is the news?" a voice asked as the boat approached.

"It is an English ship, burgomaster. She has been hotly engaged; first with Spanish galleys, and then with a war-ship, which was doubtless the *Don Pedro*, the one seen beating up this afternoon. She sank one of the galleys and beat off the ship." A loud cheer broke from the crowd. When it subsided the official went on: "I have the English captain and his son on board. The captain is sorely wounded, and I have promised him the best medical aid the town can give him."

"That he shall have," the burgomaster said. "Let him be carried to my house at once."

A stretcher was brought and the mattress was placed on it, and six of the sailors carried it on shore. The crowd fell back and formed a lane, and, led by the burgomaster, the sailors carried the wounded man into the town. He was taken upstairs, and the surgeons were speedily in attendance. It needed but a very short examination to enable them to declare that the leg must at once be amputated.

A groan burst from Ned when he heard the decision.

"I knew that it would be so, Ned," his father said. "It is well that I have been able to obtain aid so speedily.

Better a limb than life, my boy. Do you go away and tell the burgomaster how it all came about, and leave me with these gentlemen."

Ned obeyed, and the story took him nearly an hour to tell. Then one of the surgeons came down.

"It is finished," he said, "and he has borne it well. We have given him an opiate, and hope that he will soon drop off to sleep. My colleague will remain with him for four hours, and then I will return and take his place. You will be able to see him in the morning," he told Ned.

Captain Martin passed a comfortable night. The next morning he was looking very pale, but Ned thought that his face had not the drawn look that had marked it the evening before. Knowing that his father should not be excited, or even talk more than was absolutely necessary, Ned stayed but a few minutes with him, and then hurried off to the ship.

"What do you think we had better do, Master Ned?" asked Peters. "Of course it will be for the captain to decide; but in these matters it is always best to take counsel beforehand."

"What do you mean as to what is to be done, Peters?"

"Well, your father is like to be here many weeks; indeed, if I said many months I don't suppose it would be far from the truth. Things never go on quite smooth. There are sure to be inflammations, and fever keeps on coming and going; and if the doctor says three months, like enough it is six."

"Of course I shall stay here and nurse him, Peters."

"Well, Master Ned, that will be one of the points for the captain to settle. I do not suppose he will want the *Good Venture* to be lying idle all the time he is laid up; and though I can sail the ship, the trading business is altogether out of my line. You know all the merchants he

does business with, going ashore, as you most always do with him; I doubt not that you could fill his place and deal with them just the same as if he was here."

"But I cannot leave him at present."

"No, no, Master Ned; no one would think of it. Now, what I have been turning over in my mind is, that the best thing for the captain and for you and your good mother is that I should set sail in the *Venture* without the loss of a day and fetch her over. If the wind is reasonable, and we have good luck, we may be back in ten days or so."

"I think that would certainly be the best plan, Peters; and I will suggest it to my father at once."

Ned went back to his father's bedroom. He found the captain had just awoke from a short sleep.

"Father, I do not want to trouble you to think at present, but will tell you what Master Peters and I, who have been laying our heads together, conclude is best to be done. You are likely to be laid up here for some time, and it will be far the best plan for the *Good Venture* to sail over and fetch mother to nurse you."

"I shall get on well enough, Ned. I long greatly to have her with me; but Holland is no place at present to bring a woman to, and I suppose also that she would bring the girls. However, as she is a native here she will probably consider she may well run the same risks as the rest of her countrywomen. They remain with their fathers and husbands and endure what perils there may be, and she will see no reason why she should not do the same."

"What we propose is that the *Venture* should set sail at once and fetch my mother over, and the girls, if she sees fit to bring them. I shall of course stay here with you until the brig returns."

"Well, have your way, Ned. At present I cannot think over things and see what is best; so I will leave the matter

in your hands, and truly I should be glad indeed to have your mother here with me."

Well content to have obtained the permission Ned hurried from the room to arrange for the voyage.

Ned wrote a letter to his mother telling her what had taken place, and saying that his father would be glad for her to come over to be with him, but that he left it to her to decide whether to bring the girls over or not. He said no word of the events at Vordwyk; but merely mentioned they had learned that a spy had denounced his father to the Spaniards as having used expressions hostile to the king and the religious persecutions.

The *Good Venture* sailed the same evening, and Ned was soon impatient for her return. He knew that his mother's presence would do much for his father, and that whatever her own sorrows might be she would cheer him. Captain Martin never expressed any impatience for her coming; but when each morning he asked Ned, the first thing, which way the wind was blowing, his son knew well enough what he was thinking of. In the meantime Ned had been making inquiries, and had arranged for the hire of a comfortable house, whose inhabitants being Catholics, had, when Enkhuizen declared for the Prince of Orange, removed to Amsterdam. The burgomaster's wife had at his request engaged two female servants, and the nurse would of course accompany her patient. The burgomaster and his wife had both protested against any move being made; but Ned, although thanking them earnestly for their hospitable offer, pointed out that it might be a long time before his father could be about and that it was good for his mother to have the occupation of seeing to the affairs of the house to divert her thoughts from the sick-bed. The doctors having been consulted, agreed that it would be better for the wounded man to be among his own people, and that no

harm would come of removing him carefully to another house.

Therefore it was arranged that as soon as the *Good Venture* was seen approaching, Captain Martin should be carried to his new abode, where everything was kept prepared for him, and that his wife should go direct to him there.

CHAPTER V

NED'S RESOLVE

ON the ninth morning after the departure of the brig Ned was up as soon as daylight appeared, and made his way to the walls. The watchman there, with whom he had had several talks during the last two days, said:

"There is a brig, hull down, seaward, and I should say that she is about the size of the one you are looking for."

"I think it is," Ned said, gazing intently at the distant vessel. "It seems to me that I can make out that her jib is lighter in colour than the rest of her canvas. If that is so I have no doubt about its being the *Good Venture*, for we blew our jib in a storm off Ostend, and had a new one about four months ago."

"That is her then, young master," the watchman said, shading his eyes and looking intently at the brig. "Her jib is surely of lighter colour than the rest of her canvas."

With this confirmation Ned at once ran round to the house he had taken, and told the servants to have fires lighted, and everything in readiness for the reception of the party. He then went round to the doctor, who had promised that he would personally superintend the removing of his patient. After this had been done the doctor went out with Ned and charged him strictly to impress upon his mother the necessity for self-restraint and quiet when she saw her husband.

"I am not over satisfied with his state," he said, "and much will depend on this meeting. If it passes off well and he is none the worse for it tomorrow, I shall look to see him mend rapidly; but if, on the other hand, he is

agitated and excited, fever may set in at once, and in that case, weak as he is, his state will be very serious."

Ned went down to the port. He found that the brig was but a quarter of a mile away. He could make out female figures on board, and knew that, as he had rather expected would be the case, his mother had brought his sisters with her. Jumping into a boat he was rowed off to the vessel, and climbing the side was at once in his mother's arms.

"And he is really better?" were Mrs. Martin's first words as she released Ned from her embrace.

"I don't know that he is better, mother, but he is no worse. He is terribly weak; but the doctor tells me that if no harm comes to him from his agitation in meeting you, he expects to see him mend rapidly. He has been rather fretting about your safety, and I think that the knowledge that you are at hand has already done him good."

"I hope you are right," said Mrs. Martin. She added: "I have heard the news about my family, Ned. Master Peters tried his best to conceal it from me, but I was sure by his manner that there was something wrong. It was better that I should know at once," she went on, wiping her eyes. "Terrible as it all is, I have scarce time to think about it now when my mind is taken up with your father's danger."

By this time the *Good Venture* had entered the port, and had drawn up close beside one of the wharves. As soon as the sails were lowered and the warps made fast, Peters directed three of the seamen to bring up the boxes from the cabin, and to follow him. Ned then led the way to the new house.

"I will go up first, mother, and tell them that you have come."

Mrs. Martin quietly removed her hat and cloak,

followed Ned upstairs, and entered her husband's room with a calm and composed face.

"Well, my dear husband," she said almost cheerfully, "I have come to nurse you. You see when you get into trouble it is us women that you men fall back upon after all."

The doctor, who had retired into the next room when he heard that Mrs. Martin had arrived, nodded his head with a satisfied air. "She will do," he said. "I have not much fear for my patient now."

Ned, knowing that he would not be wanted upstairs for some time, went out with Peters after the baggage had been set down in the lower room.

"So you had a fine voyage of it, Peters?"

"We should have been better for a little more wind, both coming and going," the mate said; "but there was nothing much to complain of."

"You could not have been long in the river then, Peters?"

"We were six and thirty hours in port. We got in at the top of tide on Monday morning, and went down with the ebb on Tuesday evening. First, as in duty bound, I went to see our good dame and give her your letter, and answer her questions. It was a hard business that, and I would as lief have gone before the queen herself to give her an account of things as to have gone to your mother. Then I went to the merchants whose names you had given me, and who ship goods with us regularly, to tell them that the *Venture* was in port but would sail again tomorrow evening, and would take what cargo they could get on board for Enkhuizen or any of the seaward ports, but not for Amsterdam or other places still in the hands of the Spaniards.

"Then I went to the lord mayor and swore an information before him to lay before the qucen and the council

that the Spaniards had wantonly, and without offence given, attacked the *Good Venture* and inflicted much damage upon her, and badly wounded her captain; and would have sunk her had we not stoutly defended ourselves and beat them off. I was glad when all that was over, Master Ned; for, as you know, I know nought about writing.

"Then I went down to the wharves, and soon got some carpenters at work to mend the bulwarks and put some fresh planks on the deck where the shot had ploughed it up. Luckily enough I heard of a man who had some sails that he had bought from the owners of a ship which was cast away down near the mouth of the river. They were a little large for the *Venture*; but I made a bargain with him in your father's name, and got them on board and set half a dozen sailmakers to work upon them, and they were ready by the next afternoon.

"I was thankful, I can tell you, when I got on board again. The next morning at daylight fresh cargo began to come out to us, and things went on well, and would have gone better had not people come on board pestering me with questions about our fight with the Spaniards. And just at noon two of the queen's officers came down and must needs have the whole story from beginning to end; and they had brought a clerk with them to write it down from my lips. They said we had done right gallantly, and that no doubt I should be wanted the next day at the royal council to answer other questions touching the affair. You may be sure I said no word about the fact that in six hours we should be dropping down the river; for like enough if I had they would have ordered me not to go, and as I should have gone whether they had or not—seeing that Captain Martin was looking for his wife, and that the mistress was anxious to be off—it might have led to trouble when I got back again.

"By the afternoon we had got some thirty tons of goods on board, and although that is but a third of what she would carry, I was well content that we had done so much. After the new sails had come on board I had put a gang to work to bend them, and had all ready and the anchor up just as the tide turned. We had not dropped down many hundred yards when the boat with Mistress Martin and your sisters came alongside; and thankful I was when it came on dark and we were slipping down the river with a light south-westerly wind."

"Well, now it is all over, Peters," Ned said. "And you couldn't have done better."

"I did my best, sir. And now, has the captain said anything about what is going to be done with ship till he gets well?"

"Nothing whatever, Peters. He has spoken very little upon any subject. I have no doubt that as soon as he gets a little stronger he will arrange what is to be done with the brig, but I am sure it will be a long time before he can take the command again himself."

"Ay, I fear it will be," Peters agreed. "It is a pity you are not four or five years older, Master Ned. I do not say that I couldn't bring the ship into any port in Holland; for, having been sailing backwards and forwards here, man and boy, for over thirty years, I could do so pretty nigh blindfold. But what is the good of bringing a ship to a port if you have not got the head to see about getting a cargo for her, and cannot read the bills of lading, or as much as sign your name to a custom's list?"

"No, Master Ned, I am not fit for a captain, that is quite certain. But though I would not mind serving under another till your father is fit to take charge again, I could not work on board the *Venture* under another for good. I have got a little money saved up, and would rather buy a share in a small coaster and be my own

master there. After serving under your father for nigh twenty years, I know I should not get on with another skipper nowhow."

"Well, Peters, it is no use talking it over now, because I have no idea what my father's decision will be. I hope above all things that he will be able to take command again, but I have great doubts in my own mind whether he will ever do so. If he had lost the leg below the knee it would not so much have mattered; but as it is, with the whole leg stiff, he would have great difficulty in getting about, especially if the ship was rolling in a heavy sea."

John Peters shook his head gravely, for this was the very thing he had turned in his mind over and over again during the voyage to and from England.

"Your cargo is not all for this place, I suppose, Peters?"

"No, sir. Only two or three tons which are down in the forehold together are for Enkhuizen, the rest are for Leyden and the Hague. I told the merchants that if they put their goods on board I must sail past the ports and make straight on to Enkhuizen; for that first of all I must bring Mistress Martin to the captain, but that I would go round and discharge their goods as soon as I had brought her here. It was only on these terms I agreed to take the cargo."

"That will do very well, Peters. I will go on board with you at once, and see to whom your goods are consigned here, and warn them to receive them at once. You will get them on shore by tonight, and then tomorrow I will sail with you to Leyden and the Hague, and aid you in getting your cargo into the right hands there. Now that my mother and the girls are here my father will be able to spare me. We can be back here again in four or five days, and by that time I hope he will be so far

recovered as to be able to think matters over, and come to some decision as to the future management of the brig. Of course if he wishes me to stay on board her I shall obey his orders, whether you or another are the captain."

"Why, of course, you will remain on board, Master Ned. What else should you do?"

"Well, Peters, my own mind is set upon joining the Prince of Orange, and fighting against the Spaniards. Before I sailed from home I told my sisters that was what I was longing to do, for I could scarce sleep for thinking of all the cruelties and massacres that they carried out upon the people of the Netherlands, who are, by my mother's side, my kinsfolk. Since then I have scarce thought of aught else. They have murdered my grandfather and uncles and one of my aunts; they have shot away my father's leg, and would have taken his life had he not escaped out of their hands; so that what was before a longing is now a fixed idea, and if my father will but give me permission, assuredly I will carry it out."

Ned thought it better to allow his father and mother to remain quietly together for some time, and did not therefore return to the house until twelve o'clock, when he knew that dinner would be prepared; for his mother was so methodical in her ways that everything would go on just as at home directly she took charge of the affairs of the house. He went up for a few minutes before dinner, and was struck with the change in the expression of his father's face. There was a peaceful and contented look in his eyes, and it almost seemed to Ned that his face was less hollow and drawn than before. Ned told him that it would be necessary for the brig to go round to Leyden and the Hague, and that Peters had proposed that he should go with him to see the merchants, and arrange the business part of the affair.

"That will do very well," Captain Martin said. "You

are young, Ned, to begin having dealings with the Dutch merchants, but when you tell them how it comes that I am not able to call upon them myself, they will doubtless excuse your youth."

"Do you wish us to take any cargo there, father, if we can get any?"

Captain Martin did not answer for some little time, then he said:

"No, Ned, I think you had best return here in the ship. By that time I shall, I hope, be capable of thinking matters over, and deciding upon my arrangements for the future. When is Peters thinking of sailing?"

"By tomorrow morning's tide, sir. He said that he could be ready perhaps by this evening; but that unless you wished it otherwise he would not start till tomorrow's tide, as he will thereby avoid going out between the islands at night."

"That will be the best way, Ned. If the winds are fair he will be at the Hague before nightfall."

The day after his return Ned took an opportunity of speaking to his mother as to his wish to take service with the Prince of Orange, and to aid in the efforts that the people of the Netherlands were making to free themselves from their persecutors. His mother, as he feared would be the case, expressed a strong opposition to his plan.

"You are altogether too young, Ned."

"I am sixteen, mother; and a boy of sixteen who has been years at sea is as strong as one of eighteen brought up on the land. You have told me yourself that I look two or three years older than I am, and methinks I have strength to handle pike and axe."

"That may be perfectly true," said Mrs. Martin; "but even supposing all other things were fitting, how could we spare you now when your father will be months

before he can follow his trade on the sea again, even if he is ever able to do so?"

"That is the thing, mother, that weighs with me. I know not what my father's wishes may be in that respect, and of course if he holds that I can be of use to him I must give up my plan; but I want you to at any rate to mention it to him. And I pray you not to add your objections, but to let him decide on the matter according to his will."

"There will be no occasion for me to add objections, Ned. I do not think your father will listen to such a mad scheme for a moment."

It was not until three or four days later that Mrs. Martin, seeing that her husband was stronger and better, fulfilled her promise to Ned by telling his father of his wishes.

Captain Martin did not, as his wife expected, instantly declare that such a plan was not to be thought of even for a moment, but lay for some time apparently turning it over in his mind.

"I know not quite what to say," he said at length.

"Not know what to say?" his wife repeated in surprise. "Why, you surely cannot for a moment think of allowing Ned to embark in so wild a business."

"There are many English volunteers coming over; some of them not much older, and not so fit in bodily strength for the work as Ned. He has, too, the advantage of speaking the language, and can pass anywhere as a native. You are surprised, Sophie, at my thinking of this for a moment."

"But what would you do without him?" she exclaimed in astonishment.

"That is what I have been thinking as I lay here. I have been troubled what to do with Ned. He is too young yet to entrust with all the business of the ship, and the

merchants here and at home would hesitate in doing business with a lad. Moreover, he is too young to be first mate on board the brig. Peters is a worthy man and a good sailor, but he can neither read nor write and knows nought of business; and, therefore, until I am able, if I ever shall be, to return to the *Good Venture*, I must have a good seaman as first mate, and a supercargo to manage the business affairs of the ship. Were Ned four years older he could be at once, first mate and supercargo. There, you see your objection that I need him falls to the ground."

CHAPTER VI

THE PRINCE OF ORANGE

ONE morning after breakfast, a few days later, Captain Martin sent for Ned.

"Place that chair by my bedside, Ned, and sit down," he said. "My voice is not strong and it fatigues me to speak loud. And now," he went on, "this desire that your mother tells me of to fight against the Spaniards for a time in the service of the Prince of Orange, how did it first come to you?"

"Ever since I heard the terrible story of the persecutions here," Ned replied. "I said to myself then that when I came to be a man I would take revenge for these horrible murders. But I do not think that I should ever have ventured to put my desire into words, had it not been for the terrible news we learnt at Vordwyk. Now, however, that they have killed my grandfather and uncles and have wounded you, I long more than ever to join the patriots here; and of course the knowledge that many young Englishmen were coming out to Brill and Flushing as volunteers added to my desire."

"You have no desire to do great deeds or to distinguish yourself?" Captain Martin asked.

"No, father; I have never so much as thought of that. I thought I might, perhaps, being so young, be able to be of use in passing among the Spaniards and carrying messages where a man could not get through. I thought sometimes I might perhaps carry a warning in time to enable women to escape with their children from a town that was about to be beleaguered, and I hoped that if I

did stand in the ranks to face the Spaniards I should not disgrace my nation and blood."

"I am glad to see, Ned, that in this matter you are actuated by right motives, and not moved by any boyish idea of adventure or of doing feats of valour. There is none of the chivalry of past times in the struggle here. It is one of life and death—grim, earnest, and determined. On one side is Philip with the hosts of Spain, the greatest power in Europe, determined to crush out the life of these poor provinces, to stamp out the religion of the country, to leave not one man, woman, or child alive who refuses to attend mass and to bow the knee before the Papist images; on the other side you have a poor people tenantry a land snatched from the sea, and held by constant and enduring labour, equally determined that they will not abjure their religion, that they will not permit the Inquisition to be established among them, and ready to give lives and homes and all in the cause of religious liberty. They have no thought of throwing off their allegiance to Spain, if Spain will but be tolerant. The Prince of Orange issues his orders and proclamations as the stadtholder and lieutenant of the king, and declares that he is warring for Philip, and designs only to repel those who, by their persecution and cruelty, are dishonouring the royal cause. This cannot go on for ever, and in time the Netherlands will be driven to entreat some other foreign monarch to take them under his protection.

"Those who embark upon this war engage in a struggle in which there is no honour nor glory, nor fame nor reward to be won, but one in which almost certain death stares them in the face, and which, so far as I can see, can end only in the annihilation of the people of this country, or in the expulsion of the Spaniards. I do not say that there is no glory to be gained; but it is not

personal glory. In itself, no cause was ever more glorious than that of men who struggle, not to conquer territory, not to gather spoil, not to gratify ambition, but for freedom, for religion, for hearth and home, and to revenge the countless atrocities inflicted upon them by their oppressors. After what I have said, do you still wish to embark upon this struggle?"

"I do wish it, father," Ned said firmly. "I desire it above all things, if you and my mother can spare me."

Captain Martin then repeated to Ned the reasons that he had given his wife for consenting to his carrying out his wishes, especially the fact that there was no place for him at present on board the *Good Venture*.

"You are too young," he ended. "And you are too young to be a soldier too. I do not propose that you should at present actually take up arms that I question if you are strong enough to wield. I will pray the burgomaster to give you letters of introduction to the Prince, saying that you speak the language as a native, and will be ready to carry his messages wheresoever he may require them to be sent."

That afternoon Ned told Peters what had been decided, and the following morning the latter had a long talk with Captain Martin, who directed him to apply to the other owners of the ship to appoint him an able first mate, and also to choose one of their clerks in whom they had confidence to sail in the vessel as supercargo.

"The doctors tell me, Peters, that in two or three months I may be able to return home and to get about on crutches; but they advise me that it will be at least another four months before I can strap on a wooden leg and trust my weight to it. When I can do that, I shall see how I can get about. You heard from Ned last night

that he is going to enter as a sort of volunteer under the Prince of Orange?"

"Yes, he told me, Captain Martin. He is a lad of spirit; and if I were fifteen years younger I would go with him. I only hope that the brush we have had with the Spaniards will not be our last, and that we too may be in the way of striking a blow at the Spaniards."

"I hope that we may, Peters," Captain Martin said earnestly. "My mind is as much bent upon it as is Ned's; and I will tell you what must at present be known only to yourself, that I have made up mind that if I recover, and can take command of the *Good Venture* again, I will buy up the other shares, so that I can do what I like with her without accounting to any man. I need not do so much on board as I used to do, but will get you a good second mate, and will myself only direct. Then we will, as at present, trade between London and the Netherlands; but if, as is likely enough, the Spaniards and Hollanders come to blows at sea, or the prince needs ships to carry troops to beleaguered towns, then for a time we will quit trading and will join with the *Good Venture*, and strike a blow at sea."

On the following day the *Good Venture* set sail for England, and the burgomaster having received a message from Captain Martin, praying him to call upon him, paid him a visit. Captain Martin unfolded his son's plans to him, and prayed him to turnish him with a letter to the prince recommending him as one who might be trusted, and who was willing to risk his life upon any enterprise with which he might entrust him. This the burgomaster at once consented to do.

When the burgomaster had left, Captain Martin called Ned in.

"Now, you are going as a volunteer, Ned, and for a time, at any rate, there must be no question of pay; you

are giving your services and not selling them. In the first place you must procure proper attire, in which to present yourself to the prince; you must also purchase a helmet, breast and back pieces, with sword and pistols. As for money, I shall give you a purse with sufficient for your present needs, and a letter which you can present to any of the merchants in the sea ports with whom we have trade, authorising you to draw upon me, and praying them to honour your drafts. Do not stint yourself of money, and do not be extravagant. Your needs will be small, and when serving in a garrison or in the field you will, of course, draw rations like others.

"I fear that there will be many defeats before success can be obtained, for there is no union among the various states or cities. Holland and Zeeland alone seem in earnest in the cause, though Friesland and Guelderland will perhaps join heartily; but these provinces alone are really Protestant, in the other the Catholics predominate, and I fear they will never join heartily in resistance to Spain. How this narrow strip of land by the sea is to resist all the power of Spain I cannot see; but I believe in the people and in their spirit, and am convinced that sooner than fall again into the grasp of the Inquisition they will open the sluices and let the sea in over the country they have so hardly won from it, and will embark on board ship and seek in some other country that liberty to worship God in their own way that is denied them here."

Three days later Ned set sail in a small vessel bound for Rotterdam, where the Prince of Orange at present was. The voyage was made without adventure, and upon landing Ned at once made his way to the house occupied by the prince. There were no guards at the gate, or any sign of martial pomp. The door stood open, and when Ned entered a page met him and asked him his business.

"I have letters for the prince," he said, "which I pray you to hand to him when he is at leisure."

"In that case you would have to wait long," the page replied, "for the prince is at work from early morning until late at night. However, he is always open of access to those who desire to see him, therefore if you will give me the name of the writer of the letter you bear I will inform him, and you can then deliver it yourself." A minute later Ned was shown into the presence of the man who was undoubtedly the foremost of his age.

Born of a distinguished family, William of Orange had been brought up by a pious mother, and at the age of twelve had become a page in the family of the Emperor Charles. So great was the boy's ability, that at fifteen he had become the intimate and almost confidential friend of the emperor, who was a keen judge of merit.

Before he reached the age of twenty-one he was named commander-in-chief of the army on the French frontier. When the Emperor Charles resigned, the prince was appointed by Philip to negotiate a treaty with France, and had conducted these negotiations with extreme ability. The prince and the Duke of Alva remained in France as hostages for the execution of the treaty. Alva was secretly engaged in arranging an agreement between Philip and Henry for the extirpation of Protestantism, and the general destruction of all those who held that faith. The French king, believing that the Prince of Orange was also in the secret, spoke to him one day when out hunting freely on the subject, and gave him all the details of the understanding that had been entered into for a general massacre of the Protestants throughout the dominions of France and Spain.

The Prince of Orange neither by word or look

indicated that all this was new to him, and the king remained in ignorance of how completely he had betrayed the plans of himself and Philip. It was his presence of mind and reticence, while listening to this astounding relation, that gained for the Prince of Orange the title of William the Silent. Horror-struck at the plot he had discovered, the prince from that moment threw himself into the cause of the Protestants of the Netherlands, and speedily became the head of the movement, devoting his whole property and his life to the object. So far it had brought him only trials and troubles.

His estate and that of his brothers had been spent in the service; he had incurred enormous debts; the armies of German mercenaries he had raised had met with defeat and ruin; the people of the Netherlands, crushed down with the apathy of despair, had not lifted a finger to assist the forces that had marched to their aid. It was only when, almost by an accident, Brill had been captured by the sea beggars, that the spark he had for so many years been trying to fan, burst into flame in the provinces of Holland and Zeeland.

The prince had been sustained through his long and hitherto fruitless struggle by a deep sense of religion. He believed that God was with him, and would eventually save the people of the Netherlands from the fate to which Philip had doomed them. And yet though an ardent Protestant, and in an age when Protestants were well nigh as bigoted as Catholics, and when the idea of religious freedom had scarce entered into the minds of men, the prince was perfectly tolerant, and from the first insisted that in all the provinces over which he exercised authority, the same perfect freedom of worship should be granted to the Catholics that he claimed for the Protestants in the Catholic states of the Netherlands.

He had not always been a Protestant. When appointed by Philip Stadtholder of Holland, Friesland, and Utrecht he had been a moderate Catholic. But his thoughts were but little turned to religious subjects, and it was as a patriot and a man of humane nature that he had been shocked at the discovery that he had made, of the determination of the kings of France and Spain to extirpate the Protestants. He used this knowledge first to secretly urge the people of the Netherlands to agitate for the removal of the Spanish troops from the country; and although he had secret instructions from Philip to enforce the edicts against all heretics with vigour, he avoided doing so as much as was in his power, and sent private warnings to many whom he knew to be in danger of arrest.

As Governor of the Netherlands at the age of twenty-six, he was rich, powerful, and of sovereign rank. He exercised a splendid hospitality, and was universally beloved by the whole community for the charm of his manner and his courtesy to people of all ranks. Even at this period the property which he had inherited from his father, and that he had received with his first wife, Ann of Egmont, the richest heiress of the Netherlands, had been seriously affected by his open-handed hospitality and lavish expenditure. His intellect was acknowledged to be of the highest class. He had extraordinary adroitness and capacity for conducting state affairs. His knowledge of human nature was profound. He had studied deeply, and spoke and wrote with facility Latin, French, Flemish, and Spanish.

The epithet Silent was in no way applicable to his general character. He could be silent when speech was dangerous, but at other times he was a most cheerful and charming companion, and in public the most eloquent orator and the most brilliant controversialist of his age.

Thirteen years had passed since then, thirteen years spent in incessant troubles and struggles. The brilliant governor of Philip in the Netherlands had for years been an exile; the careless Catholic had become an earnest and sincere Protestant; the wealthy noble had been harassed with the pecuniary burdens he had undertaken in order to raise troops for the rescue of his countrymen.

He had seen his armies defeated, his plans overthrown, his countrymen massacred by tens of thousands, his co-religionists burnt, hung, and tortured, and it was only now that the spirit of resistance was awakening among his countrymen. But misfortune and trial had not soured his temper; his faith that sooner or later the cause would triumph had never wavered. His patience was inexhaustible, his temper beyond proof. The incapacity of many in whom he had trusted, the jealousies and religious differences which prevented anything like union between the various states, the narrowness and jealousy even of those most faithful to the cause, would have driven most men to despair.

Upon his shoulders alone rested the whole weight of the struggle. It was for him to plan and to carry out, to negotiate with princes, to organise troops, to raise money, to compose jealousies, to rouse the lukewarm and appeal to the waverers. Every detail, great and small, had to be elaborated by him. So far it was not the Netherlands, it was William of Orange alone who opposed himself to the might of the greatest power in Europe.

Such was the prince to whom Ned Martin was now introduced, and it was with a sense of the deepest reverence that he entered the chamber. He saw before him a man looking ten years older than he really was; whose hair was grizzled and thin from thought and care, whose

narrow face was deeply marked by the lines of anxiety and trouble, but whose smile was as kindly, whose manner as kind and gracious as that which had distinguished it when William was the brilliant young stadtholder of the Emperor Philip.

CHAPTER VII

A DANGEROUS MISSION

"I HEAR you have a letter for me from my good friend the burgomaster of Enkhuizen," the Prince of Orange said, as Ned with a deep reverence approached the table at which he was sitting. "He sends me no ill news, I hope?"

"No, your excellency," Ned said. "It is on a matter personal to myself that he has been good enough to write to you, and I crave your pardon beforehand for occupying your time for a moment with so unimportant a subject."

The prince glanced at him keenly as he was speaking, opened the letter and glanced down it.

"Ah! you are English," he said in surprise. "I thought you a countryman of mine."

"My mother is from Holland, sir," Ned replied; "and has brought me up to speak her language as well as my father's, and to feel that Holland is my country as much as England."

"And you are the son of the English captain who, lately, as I heard, being stopped in his passage down the Zuider-Zee by the Spanish ship *Don Pedro*, defended himself so stoutly that he inflicted great loss and damage upon the Spaniard, and brought his ship into Enkhuizen without further damage than a grievous wound to himself. The burgomaster tells me that you are anxious to enter my service as a volunteer, and that you have the permission of your parents to do so. Many of your brave compatriots are already coming over; and I am glad indeed of their aid, which I regard as an omen that

England will some day bestir herself on our behalf. But you look young for such rough work, young sir. I should not take you for more than eighteen."

"I am not yet eighteen, sir," Ned said, although he did not think it necessary to mention that he still wanted two years to that age."

"Your youth is no drawback in my eyes, seeing that I myself, long before I reached your age, was mixed up in state affairs. I accept your offer of service in the name of the Netherlands. I will for the present appoint you as a volunteer attached to my own household, and, trust me, I will not keep you long in idleness." He touched a bell and the page entered. "Take this gentleman," he said, "to Count Nieuwenar, and tell him that he is to have rank as a gentleman volunteer."

On the following day the prince rode to Haarlem accompanied by his household and a hundred horsemen, for at Haarlem he had summoned a meeting of the representatives of the states that still remained faithful to him. As soon as they were settled in the quarters assigned to them Ned sallied out to make inquiries concerning the relatives with whom his aunt and cousins had taken refuge. As he knew her maiden name he had no great difficulty in learning the part of the town in which her father dwelt. He made his way thither, introducing himself to the burgher.

"Ah!" the latter said, "I have often heard my daughter speak of her sister-in-law who had married and settled in England. So you are her son? Well, you will find her house in the street that runs along by the city wall, near the Watergate. It was well that she happened to be laid up with illness at the time Alva's ruffians seized and murdered her husband and his family. I would gladly have welcomed her here, but I have another married daughter who lives with me and keeps my house

for me, and as she has half a dozen children the house is well-nigh full. And Elizabeth longed for quiet in her sorrow, so I established her in the little house I tell you of. She tells me that her husband and his brothers had, foreseeing the evil times coming, sent money to England to your father's care, and that it has been invested in houses in London."

"I believe that is so," Ned replied; "and my father, who is at present lying sorely wounded at Enkhuizen, will, I am sure, now that he knows where my aunt is, communicate with her by letter on the subject. I will give you his address at Enkhuizen, and as it is but a short journey from here you might perhaps find time to go over and see him, when he will be able to talk freely with you on the subject. Now, with your permission I will go and see my aunt."

Ned had no difficulty in finding the house indicated. He knocked at the door, and it was opened by his aunt herself. She looked up for a moment inquiringly, and then exclaimed:

"Why, it is my nephew, Edward Martin! It is nearly two years since I saw you last, and so much has happened since;" and she burst into tears.

Ned followed her into the house, where he was warmly welcomed by his two cousins—girls of fourteen and fifteen years old. He had first to explain how it was that he had come to Haarlem, and they were grieved to hear what had happened to Captain Martin, who was a great favourite with them.

"And so you have entered the service of the Prince of Orange?" his aunt said when he had finished his story. "Truly I wonder that your father and mother have allowed you to embark in so hopeless an enterprise."

"Not hopeless," Ned said. "Things look dark at present, but either England or France may come to our

help. At any rate, aunt, if the Spanish army again sweeps over Holland and Zeeland surely you, with two girls, will not await its approach. You have friends in England. My father and mother will be only too glad to have you with them till you can make yourself a home close by."

"All my family are here," she replied; "my father, and brothers, and sisters. I could never be happy elsewhere."

"Yes, aunt, I can understand that. But if the Spaniards come, how many of your family may be alive here a week afterwards?"

The woman threw up her hands in a gesture of despair.

"Well, we must hope for the best, aunt; but I would urge you most strongly if you hear that a Spanish army is approaching to fly to England if there be an opportunity open to you, or if not to leave the city and go to some town or village as far from here as possible."

"Haarlem is strong, and can stand a stout siege," the woman said confidently.

"I have no doubt it can, aunt. But the Spaniards are good engineers, and unless the Prince of Orange is strong enough to march to its succour, sooner or later it must fall. Well, aunt, please think it over. If you doubt my words write to my mother at Enkhuizen. I warrant she will tell you how gladly she will receive you in England, and how well you may make yourself a home there."

Ned remained for a fortnight without any particular duties. When the prince was closeted with persons of importance, and he knew that there was no chance of his being required, he spent much of his time at his aunt's. He was beginning to feel weary of hanging about the prince's ante-chamber doing nothing, when one day a page came up to him and told him that the prince required his presence. He followed the boy to the prince's cabinet.

"I daresay you began to think that I had forgotten you," the prince began when the page had retired and the curtain had fallen behind him, "but it is not so. Until today I have had no occasion for your services, but have now a mission to intrust to you. I have letters that I wish carried to Brussels and delivered to some of my friends there. You had best start at once in the disguise of a peasant-boy. You must sew up your despatches in your jerkin, and remember that if they are found upon you a cruel death will surely be your fate. If you safely carry out your mission in Brussels return with the answers you will receive by such route as may seem best to you; for this must depend upon the movements of the Spaniards. The chamberlain will furnish you with what money you may require."

"Thanks, your excellency, I am provided with sufficient means for such a journey."

"I need not tell you, my lad, to be careful and prudent. You will see that there are no names upon these letters; only a small private mark, differing in each case, by which you can distinguish them. Here is a paper which is a key to those marks. You must, before you start, learn by heart the names of those for whom the various letters are intended.

"This paper, on which is written 'To the Blue Cap in the South Corner of the Market Square of Brussels,' is intended to inclose all the other letters, and when you have learned the marks Count Nieuwenar will fasten them up in it and seal it with my seal. The object of doing this is, that should you be captured, you can state that your instructions from me are to deliver the packet to a man with a blue cap, who will meet you at the south corner of the Market Square at Brussels, and, touching you on the shoulder, ask 'How blows the wind in Holland?' These are the instructions I now give you. If

such a man comes to you you will deliver the packet to him, if not you will open it and deliver the letters. But this last does not form part of your instructions.

"This device will not save your life if you are taken, but it may save you from torture and others from death. For were these unaddressed letters found upon you, you would be put to such cruel tortures that flesh and blood could not withstand them, and the names of those for whom these letters are intended would be wrung from you; but inclosed as they are to Master Blue Cap, it may be believed that you are merely a messenger whose instructions extend no further than the handing over the parcel to a friend of mine in Brussels. Now, you have no time to lose. You have your disguise to get, and these signs and the names they represent to commit to heart. A horse will be ready in two hours time to take you to Rotterdam, whence you will proceed in a coasting vessel to Sluys or Axel."

At the time named Ned was in readiness. He was dressed now as a young Flemish peasant. He had left the chest with his clothes, together with his armour and weapons, in the care of his aunt's father, for he hoped that before his return she would have left the town. He could not, however, obtain any promise that she would do so.

Ned carried a stout stick; which was a more formidable weapon than it looked, for the knob was loaded with lead. He hesitated about taking pistols; for if at any time he were searched and such weapons found upon him the discovery might prove fatal, for a peasant boy certainly would not be carrying weapons that were at that time costly and comparatively rare. His despatches were sewn up in the lining of his coat, and his money, beyond that required for the present use, hidden in his big boots. A country horse with rough trappings, such as a small

farmer might ride, was in readiness, and mounting this he rode to Rotterdam, some thirty-five miles distant, and there put it up at a small inn, where he had been charged to leave it.

He then walked down to the river and inquired about boats sailing for the ports of Sluys and Axel. He was not long in discovering one that would start the next day for the latter place, and after bargaining with the master for a passage returned to the inn. The next morning he set sail soon after daybreak.

No questions were asked when they drew up alongside the wharves at Axel. Ned at once stepped ashore and made his way to a small inn, chiefly frequented by sailors, near the jetty. The shades of night were just falling as they arrived, and he thought that it were better not to attempt to proceed further until the following morning. He had been several times at Axel in the *Good Venture*, and was familiar with the town. The population was a mixed one, for although situated in Brabant, Axel had so much communication with the opposite shores of Holland that a considerable portion of the population had imbibed something of the spirit that animated their neighbours, and would, if opportunity offered, have gladly thrown off the authority of the officials appointed by the Spaniards.

As soon as the gates were open in the morning Ned made his way to that through which the road to Brussels ran. The four or five Spanish soldiers at the gate asked no questions, and Ned passed on with a brisk step. He had gone about three miles when he heard sounds of horses' hoofs behind him, and presently two men came along. One was, by his appearance, a person of some importance; the other, a man with a villainous squint, he took to be his clerk. Ned doffed his hat as the horse went past.

"Where are you going lad?" the elder of the two men asked.

"I am going, worshipful sir, to see some friends who live at the village of Deligen, near Brussels."

"These are evil times for travelling. Your tongue shows that you come not from Brabant."

"No, sir, my relations lived at Vordwyk, hard by Amsterdam."

"Amsterdam is a faithful city; although there, as elsewhere, there are men who are traitors to their king and false to their faith. You are not one of them, I hope?"

"I do not know," Ned said, "that I am bound to answer questions of any that ride by the highway, unless I know that they have the right and authority to question me."

"I have the right and authority," the man said angrily. "My name is Philip Von Aert, and I am one of the council charged by the viceroy to investigate into these matters."

Ned again doffed his hat. "I know your name, worshipful sir, as that of one who is foremost in searching out heretics. There are few in the land, even ignorant country boys like myself, who have not heard it."

The councillor looked gratified. "Ah! you have heard me well spoken of?" he said.

"I have heard you spoken of, sir, well or ill, according to the sentiments of those who spoke."

"And why have you left Amsterdam to journey so far from home? This is a time when all men must be looked upon with suspicion until they prove themselves to be good Catholics and faithful subjects of the king, and even a boy like you may be engaged upon treasonable business. I ask you again, why are you leaving your family at Amsterdam?"

"Misfortunes have fallen upon them," Ned replied, "and they can no longer maintain me."

"Misfortunes, ah! and of what kind?"

"Their business no longer brings them in profit," Ned replied. "They lived, as I told your worship, not in the town itself, but in a village near it, and in these troubled times trade is well nigh at a stand-still, and there is want at many a man's door."

"I shall stop for the night at Antwerp, where I have business to do; see when you arrive there that you call upon me. I must have further talk with you, for your answers do not satisfy me."

Ned bowed low.

"Very well, see that you fail not, or it will be the worse for you." So saying Von Aert put spurs to his horse, which had been walking alongside Ned as he conversed, and rode forward at a gallop.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE HANDS OF THE BLOOD-COUNCIL

"You are an evil-looking pair of scoundrels," Ned said to himself as he looked after the retreating figures of the two men. "The master I truly know by name as one of the Council of Blood; as to the man, knave is written on his face. The councillor will not have a chance of asking me any more questions this evening, and I only hope that he will be too busy to think and more about it. I will take the road through Ghent it matters little which way I go, for the two roads seem to me to be of nearly equal distance."

He therefore at once left the road he was following, and struck across the fields northward until he came upon the road to Ghent, at which town he arrived soon after noon, having walked two or three and twenty miles. Fearing to be questioned he passed through the town without stopping, crossed the Scheldt and continued his way for another five miles, when he stopped at the village of Gontere. He passed the night at an inn.

The next morning Ned set out at daybreak, and arrived at Brussels early in the afternoon. He slept that night under the shelter of a hay-stack, and in the morning entered the city as soon as the gates were opened, going in with a number of market-people who had congregated there awaiting the opening of the gates. In a very short time the shops were all opened; for if people went to bed early, they were also astir early in those days. He went first towards the house of one of the

burghers, and watched until he saw the man himself appear at the doorway of his shop; then he walked across the street.

"The weather is clear," he said, "but the sun is nigh hidden with clouds."

The burgher gave a slight start; then Ned went on:

"I have brought you tidings from the farm."

"Come in," the burgher said in loud tones, so that he could be heard by his two assistants in the shop. "My wife will be glad to hear tidings of her old nurse, who was ill when she last heard from her. You can reassure her in that respect, I hope?"

"Yes, she is mending fast," Ned replied, as he followed the burgher through the shop.

The man led the way upstairs, and then into a small sitting-room. He closed the door behind him.

"Now," he asked, "what message do you bring from Holland?"

"I bring a letter," Ned replied; and taking out his knife cut the threads of the lining of his jerkin and produced the packet. The silk that bound it, and which was fastened by the prince's seal, was so arranged that it could be slipped off, and so enable the packet to be opened without breaking the seal. Ned took out the letters; and after examining the marks on the corners, handed one to the burgher. The latter opened and read the contents.

"I am told," he said when he had finished, "not to give you an answer in writing, but to deliver it by word of mouth. Tell the prince that I have sounded many of my guild, and that certainly the greater part of the weavers will rise and join in expelling the Spaniards whenever a general rising has been determined upon; and it is certain that all the other chief towns will join in the movement. Unless it is general, I fear that nothing

can be done. All must rise or none will do so. I am convinced that Brussels will do her part, if others do theirs; although, as the capital; it is upon her the first brunt of the Spanish attack will fall. In regard to money, tell him that at present none can be collected. In the first place, we are all well nigh ruined by the exactions of the Spanish; and in the next, however well-disposed we may be, there are few who would commit themselves by subscribing for the cause until the revolt is general and successful. Then, I doubt not, that the councillors would vote as large a subsidy as the city could afford to pay. Four at least of the members of the council of our guild can be thoroughly relied upon, and the prince can safely communicate with them. These are Gunther, Barneveldt, Hasselaer, and Buys."

Ned, as he left the house, decided that the man he had visited was not one of those who would be of any great use in an emergency. He was evidently well enough disposed to the cause, but was not one to take any great risks, or to join openly in the movement unless convinced that success was assured for it. He was walking along, thinking the matter over, when he was suddenly and roughly accosted. Looking up he saw the Councillor Von Aert and his clerk.

"Hullo, sirrah," the councillor said angrily, "did I not tell you to call upon me at Antwerp?"

Ned took off his hat, and said humbly, "I should of course have obeyed your worship's order had I passed through Antwerp; but I afterwards remembered that I had cause to pass through Ghent, and therefore took that road, knowing well that one so insignificant as myself should have nothing to tell your worship that should occupy your valuable time."

"That we will see about," the councillor said grimly. "Genet, lay your hand upon this young fellow's collar.

We will lodge him in safe keeping, and inquire into the matter when we have leisure."

Ned glanced round; a group of Spanish soldiers were standing close by, and he saw that an attempt at escape would be hopeless. He therefore walked quietly along by the side of the clerk's horse. Several bystanders, seeing Ned led by the collar behind the dreaded councillor, speedily gathered around with looks expressing no goodwill to Von Aert. The Spanish soldiers, however, accustomed to frays with the townspeople, at once drew their weapons and closed round the clerk and his captive, and two minutes later they arrived at the door of the prison.

Ned was handed over to two warders, who conducted him to a chamber in the third storey. Here, to his dismay, one of his jailers took up his post, while the other retired, locking the door behind him. Thus the intention Ned had formed as he ascended the stairs of destroying the documents as soon as he was alone, was frustrated. The warder took his place at the window, which looked into an inner court of the prison, and putting his head out entered into conversation with some of his comrades in the yard below.

Ned regretted now that he had, before leaving the burgher, again sewn up the letters in his doublet. Had he carried them loosely about him, he could have chewed them up one by one and swallowed them; but he dared not attempt to get at them now, as his warder might at any moment look round. The latter was relieved twice during the course of the day. None of the men paid any attention to the prisoner.

It was late in the evening before a warder appeared at the door, and said that the councillor was below, and that the prisoner was to be brought before him. Ned was led by the two men to a chamber on the ground floor.

Here Von Aert, with two of his colleagues, was seated at a table, the former's clerk standing behind him.

"Has he been searched?" Von Aert asked the warder.

"No, your excellency. You gave no orders that he should be examined."

"Fools!" the counsellor said angrily; "this is the way you do your duty. Had he been the bearer of important correspondence he might have destroyed it by now."

"We have not left him, your excellency. He had no opportunity whatever for destroying anything."

"Well, search that bundle first," the councillor said.

The bundle was found to contain nothing suspicious.

"Now, take off his doublet and boots and examine them carefully. Let not a seam or corner escape you."

Accustomed to the work, one of the warders had scarcely taken the doublet in his hand when he proclaimed that there was a parcel sewn up in the lining.

"I thought so!" Von Aert exclaimed, beaming with satisfaction at his own perspicacity.

The councillor's colleagues murmured their admiration at his acuteness.

"What have we here?" Von Aert went on, as he examined the packet. "A sealed parcel addressed 'To the Blue Cap in the South Corner of the Market Square of Brussels.' What think you of that, my friends, for mystery and treason? Now, let us see the contents. Ah, ten letters without addresses! But I see there are marks different from each other on the corners. Ah!" he went on with growing excitement, as he tore one open and glanced at the contents, "from the arch-traitor himself to conspirators here in Brussels. This is an important capture indeed. Now, sirrah, what have you to say to this? For whom are these letters intended?"

"I know nothing of the contents of the letters,

worshipful sir," Ned said, falling on his knees and assuming an appearance of abject terror. "They were delivered to me at Haarlem, and I was told that I should have five nobles if I carried them to Brussels and delivered them safely to a man who would meet me in the south corner of the Market Square of Brussels. I was to hold the packet in my hand and sling my bundle upon my stick, so that he might know me. He was to have a blue cap on, and was to touch me on the shoulder and ask me 'How blows the wind in Holland?'" and that, worshipful sir, is all I know about it. I could not tell that there was any treason in the business, else not for fifty nobles would I have undertaken it."

"You lie, you young villain!" the councillor shouted. "Do you try to persuade me that the Prince of Orange would have intrusted documents of such importance to the first boy he met in the street? In the first place you must be a heretic."

"I don't know about heretics," Ned said, rising to his feet and speaking stubbornly. "I am of the religion my father taught me, and I would not pretend that I was a Catholic, not to save my life."

"There you are, you see," the councillor said triumphantly to his colleagues. "Look at the obstinacy and insolence of these Hollanders. Even this brat of a boy dares to tell us that he is not a Catholic. Take him away," he said to the warder, "and see that he is securely kept. We may want to question him again; but in any case he will go to the gallows tomorrow or next day."

Ned was at once led away.

"What think you?" Von Aert asked his colleagues as the door closed behind the prisoner. "Is it worth while to apply the torture to him at once to obtain from him the names of those for whom these letters were intended? It is most important for us to know. Look at this letter; it is

from the prince himself, and refers to preparations making for a general rising."

"I should hardly think the boy would have been intrusted with so important a secret," one of the other councillors said; "for it would be well known he would be forced by torture to reveal it if these letters were to be found upon him. I think that the story he tells us is a true one, and that it is more likely they would be given him to deliver to some person who would possess the key to these marks on the letters."

"Well, at any rate no harm can be done by applying the screws," the councillor said. "If he knows they will make him speak, I warrant you."

The other two agreed.

"If you will allow me to suggest, your excellency," Genet said humbly, "that it might be the better way to try first if any such as this Blue Cap exists. The boy might be promised his life if he could prove that the story was true. Doubtless there is some fixed hour at which he was to meet this Blue Cap. We might let him go to meet him, keeping of course a strict watch over him. Then if any such man appears and speaks to him we could pounce upon him at once and wring from him the key to these marks. If no such man appears we should then know that the story was but a device to deceive, and could then obtain by some means the truth from him."

The suggestion met with approval.

"That is a very good plan, and shall be carried out. Send for the prisoner again."

Ned was brought down again.

"We see that you are young," Von Aert said, "and you have doubtless been misled in this matter, and knew not that you were carrying treasonable correspondence. We therefore are disposed to treat you leniently. At what time were you to meet this Blue Cap in the market?"

"Within an hour of sunset," Ned replied. "I am to be there at sunset and to wait for an hour; and was told that he would not fail to come in that time, but that if he did I was to come again the next day."

"It is to be hoped that he will not fail you," Von Aert said grimly, "for we shall not be disposed to wait his pleasure. Tomorrow evening you will go with a packet and deliver it to the man when he comes to you. If the man comes those who are there will know how to deal with him."

"And shall I be at liberty to depart?" Ned asked doubtfully.

"Of course you will," Von Aert replied; "we should then have no further occasion for you, and you would have proved to us that your story was a true one."

As Ned sat alone in his cell during the long hours of the following day he longed for the time to come when his fate was to be settled. He thought that he had a fair chance of escape. It was clear that he could not be closely surrounded by a guard, for in that case Blue Cap would not venture near him. He must, therefore, be allowed a considerable amount of liberty; and, however many men might be on watch a short distance off, he ought to be able by a sudden rush to make his way through them. There would at that hour be numbers of people in the street, and this would add to his chance of evading his pursuers.

He ate heartily of a meal that was brought him at mid-day, and when just at sunset the warder entered the cell and told him to follow him, he felt equal to any exertion. When he came down into the courtyard, a dozen men were gathered there, together with Von Aert and his clerk.

"Now," the councillor said sternly, "you see these men. They will be round you on all sides, and I warn

you that if you attempt to escape or to give any warning sign to this Blue Cap, or to try any tricks with us of any sort, you shall be put to death with such tortures as you never dreamt of. Upon the other hand, if you carry out my orders faithfully, and hand over this packet to the man who meets you, you will be at liberty to go straight away, and to return home without molestation."

"I understand," Ned replied; "and as I cannot help myself, will do your bidding. Where are my stick and bundle? He will not know me unless I have them. I am to carry them on my shoulder."

"Ah! I forgot," the councillor said, and giving the order to one of the warders Ned's bundle and stick were brought him.

"You will stroll leisurely along," Von Aert said, "and appear natural and unconcerned. We shall be close to you, and you will be seized in an instant if we observe anything suspicious in your movements." Von Aert then took a packet from his doublet and handed it to Ned, who placed it in his belt. The prison door was opened; three or four of the men went out, and Ned followed.

CHAPTER IX

IN HIDING

AFTER five minutes' walking Ned arrived at the market-square, and passed steadily on down towards the south corner. The market was long since over, and the market folk had returned to their farms and villages, but there were a large number of people walking about. It was already growing dusk, and in another half-hour would be dark. Ned turned when he got near the corner, strolled a short distance back and then turned again, pacing backwards and forwards some thirty or forty yards. He carefully abstained from seeming to stare about. The councillor and his clerk kept within a short distance of him, the former wrapped up in a cloak with a high collar that almost concealed his face.

As to the others watching him, Ned could only guess at them. Four men he noticed, who turned whenever he did; the others he guessed were keeping somewhat further off, or were perhaps stationed at the streets leading out of the square so as to cut him off should he escape from those close to him. A few oil lamps were suspended from posts at various points in the square, and at the ends of the streets leading from it. These were lighted soon after he arrived in the square. He decided that it would not do to make for the street leading out of the south corner, as this was the one that he would be suspected of aiming for; and, moreover, men would surely be placed there to cut off Blue Cap on his entry. He, therefore, determined to make for a somewhat narrow street, about halfway between the south and west corners.

Half an hour passed. It was now quite dark, and he felt that he had better delay no longer. He walked half along his beat towards the south corner, then with a sudden spring darted off. The two men walking on that side of him were some ten paces distant, and he ran straight at them. Taken by surprise, before they had time to throw back their cloaks and draw their rapiers, he was upon them.

With a blow from his leaded stick, delivered with all his strength, he struck one man to the ground, and then turning to the other struck him on the wrist as he was in the act of drawing his sword. The man uttered a loud cry of pain and rage, and Ned ran at the top of his speed towards the street. He knew that he need fear no pursuit from the two men he had encountered, that those on the other side of him were some distance behind, and that as so many people intervened his pursuers would probably soon lose sight of him. Threading his way between the groups of people, who had arrested their walk at the sound of loud and sudden shouting, he approached the end of the street.

By the light of the lamp there he saw two men standing with drawn swords. Breaking suddenly into a walk he made for the house next to the street, and then turned so that he came upon the men sideways instead of from the front, at which they were expecting him. There was a sudden exclamation from the man nearest to him; but Ned was within two yards of him before he perceived him, and before he was on guard the loaded stick fell with the full sweep of Ned's arm upon his ankle, and in an instant he was prostrate, and Ned darted at full speed down the street with the other man in pursuit a few paces behind him.

Before he had run far Ned found that he could gain but little upon his pursuer, and that he must rid himself

of him if he were to have a chance of escaping. He slackened his speed a little, and allowed the man to gain slightly upon him. Thinking that the fugitive was within his grasp the warder exerted himself to his utmost. Suddenly Ned sprang into a doorway; the man, unable to check himself, rushed past. In a moment Ned was out again, and before the fellow could arrest his steps and turn, gave him a violent shove behind, which hurled him on to his face with a tremendous crash, and Ned continued his way. There was a great shouting, but it was full fifty yards away, and he felt his hopes rise. His pursuers were now all behind him, and he felt sure that in the darkness and the narrow streets he should be able to evade them.

He took the first turning he came to, turned again and again, and presently slackened his pace to a walk, convinced that for a time his pursuers must be at fault. He was now among narrow streets inhabited by the poorer classes. There were no lamps burning here, and he began to wonder which way he had better take, and where he should pass the night. It was absolutely necessary to obtain some other disguise, for he was sure that the gates would be so carefully watched in the morning there would be no chance whatever of his getting safely out in his present attire. Presently, through a casement on the ground-floor, he heard the sound of low singing in a woman's voice. He stopped at once and listened. It was the air of a Lutheran hymn he had frequently heard in Holland. Without hesitation he knocked at the door, and lifting the latch entered. A woman and girl were sitting at work inside; they looked up in surprise at seeing a stranger.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I am Protestant, and am hunted by Alva's blood-hounds. I have evaded them, and I am safe for the present; but I know not where to go,

or where to obtain a disguise. As I passed the window I heard the air of a Lutheran hymn, and knew that there were within those who would, if they could, aid me."

The woman looked reprovingly at the girl.

"How imprudent of you, Gertrudel!" she said. "Not that it is your fault more than mine. Who are you, sir, and where do you come from?" she asked, turning to Ned.

"I come from Holland," he said; "and was the bearer of important letters from the Prince of Orange."

The woman hesitated. "I would not doubt you," she said; "though it seems to me strange that an important mission should be intrusted to one of your age and station."

"My age was all in my favour," Ned replied. "As to my station, it is not quite what it seems; for I am a gentleman volunteer in the household of the prince."

"I will give you shelter," the woman said quietly; "though I know that I risk my life and my daughter's in doing so." So saying, she got up and barred the door.

"Now, tell me more as to how you came to fall into this peril," she said.

Ned related his adventure, and the manner in which he had effected his escape from the hands of his captors.

"You have, indeed, had an escape," the woman said. "There are few upon whom Councillor Von Aert lays his hand who ever escape from it. And now, what are your plans?"

"My only plan is to obtain a disguise in which to escape from the city. My mission is unfortunately ended by the loss of my papers, and I shall have but a sorry story to tell to the prince if I succeed in making my way back to Holland."

He took from his belt the packet that Von Aert had given him, and was about to throw it in the fire when his

eye fell upon it. He opened it hastily, and exclaimed with delight, "Why, here are the letters! That scoundrel must have had them in his doublet, as well as the packet made up for me to carry, and he has inadvertently given me the wrong parcel. See, madam, these are the letters I told you of, and these are the marks in the corners whose meaning Von Aert was so anxious to discover. Now, if I can but obtain a good disguise I will deliver these letters before I start on my way back."

The girl, who was about fourteen years of age, spoke a few words in a low voice to her mother. The latter glanced at Ned.

"My daughter suggests that you should disguise yourself as a woman," she said. "And indeed in point of height you might pass well, seeing that you are but little taller than myself. But I fear that you are far too widely built across the shoulders to wear my clothes."

"Yes, indeed," Ned agreed, smiling; "but you are tall and slight. I could pass well enough for one of these Flemish peasant girls, for they are sometimes near as broad as they are long. Yes, indeed, If I could get a dress such as these girls wear I could pass easily enough. I am well provided with money, but unfortunately it is hidden in the ground a mile outside the gates. I only carry with me a small sum for daily use, and that of course was taken from me by my jailers."

"Be not uneasy about money," the woman said. "Like yourself, we are not exactly what we look. I am the Countess Von Harp."

Ned made a movement of surprise. The name was perfectly known to him, being that of a noble in Friesland who had been executed at Brussels a few months before by the orders of the Council of Blood.

"When my husband was murdered," the Countess Von Harp went on, "I received a warning from a friend

that I and my daughter would be seized. An old servant took this house for me, and there I have lived ever since in the disguise you see. My servant still lives with us, and goes abroad and makes our purchases. Our neighbours are all artisans and attend to their own business. It is supposed among them that I am one who has been ruined in the troubles, and now support myself by embroidery; but in fact I am well supplied with money. When I came here I brought all my jewels with me; besides, I have several good friends who know my secret, and through whom, from time to time, money has been transmitted to me from my steward in Friesland. Our estates in Brabant have of course been confiscated, and for a time those in Friesland were also seized. But when the people rose four months ago they turned out the man who had seized them, and as he was a member of the Council of Blood he was lucky in escaping with his life. So that, you see, the cost of a peasant woman's dress is a matter that need give you no concern."

There was now a knock at the door. It was repeated.

"It is my servant," the countess said. Ned at once unbarred and opened the door. The old woman gave an exclamation of astonishment at seeing a stranger.

"Come in, Magdalene," the countess said; "it is a friend. You are later than I expected."

"It is not my fault, madam," the old servant said. "I have been stopped four or five times, and questioned and made game of, by German soldiers posted at the ends of the streets; the quarter is full of them. I was going through the market-place when a sudden tumult arose, and they say a prisoner of great importance has made his escape. Councillor Von Aert was there, shouting like a madman. But he had better have held his tongue; for as soon as he was recognised the crowd hustled and beat him, and went nigh killing him, when some men with

drawn swords rescued him from their hands, and with great difficulty escorted him to the town-hall. He is hated in Brussels, and it was rash of him to venture out after dark."

"This is the escaped prisoner, Magdalene." The old woman looked with surprise at Ned.

"You are pleased to joke with me, madame. This is but a boy."

"That is true, Magdalene; but he is, nevertheless, the prisoner whose escape angered the councillor so terribly, and for whom the guard you speak of are now in search."

The old servant shook her head. "Ah, madam, are you not running risks enough of detection here without adding to them that of concealing a fugitive?"

"You are right," Ned said; "and it was selfish and wrong of me to intrude myself here."

"God willed it so," the countess said. "Magdalene, we have settled that he shall assume the disguise of a young peasant girl, and tomorrow you shall purchase the necessary garments."

"Yes, he might pass as a girl," the old servant agreed. "Tomorrow I will go out and get him a gown at the clothes-mart."

When this was settled Ned told the countess more about himself and of the events which had led him to take service with the Prince of Orange. When he had concluded the countess spoke of England.

"Many of our people have taken refuge there," she said, "and I have more than once thought that if the Spaniards continued to lord it in the Netherlands I would pass across the seas with Gertrude."

"If you should go to England, madam," Ned said earnestly, "I pray you in the first place to inquire for Mistress Martin at Rotherhithe, which is close by the city. I can warrant you she will do all in her power to

assist you, and that her house will be at your disposal until you can find a more suitable lodgment."

When the clock sounded nine they retired, Magdalene insisting upon Ned occupying her chamber, while she lay down upon a settle in the room in which they were sitting. Ned slept long and heavily; he had had but little rest during the two previous nights, and the sun was high when he awoke. As soon as he began to move about there was a knock at his door, and the old servant entered.

"I need not ask if you have slept well," she remarked, "for the clocks have sounded nine, and I have been back an hour from market. Here are all your things, and I warrant me that when you are dressed in them you will pass anywhere as a buxom peasant girl."

Indeed, when Ned came downstairs in the short petticoats, trimmed bodice, and bright kerchief pinned across the bosom, and two rows of large blue beads round his neck, his disguise was perfect save as to his head. This Magdalene arranged for him. "Yes, you will do very well now," she said, surveying him critically. "I have bought a basket, too, full of eggs; and with that on your arm you can go boldly out and fear no detection, and can walk straight through the city gates."

"He must return here this evening, Magdalene," the countess said. "He has a mission to perform, and cannot leave until he does."

"I will set about it at once, countess, and shall get it finished before the gates are closed. I will not on any account bring upon you the risk of another night's stay here."

"I think there will be no risk in it," the countess said firmly; "and for today at least there is sure to be a vigilant watch kept at the gates. It were best, too, that you left before noon, for by that time most of the people from the villages round are returning. If you are not recognised in

the streets there is no risk whatever while you are in here; besides, we shall be anxious to know how you have got through the day."

Although Ned saw that the old servant was very reluctant that he should, as she considered, imperil her charges' safety by a longer stay, he could not refuse the invitation so warmly given. Breakfast was now placed on the table. As soon as the meal was over he prepared to start.

"What is the price at which I ought to offer my eggs?" he asked.

Magdalene told him the price she generally paid to the market woman. "Of course you must ask a little more than that, and let people beat you down to that figure."

"Now I am off, then," he said, taking up the basket.

"May God keep you in his hands!" the countess said solemnly. "It is not only your own life that is at stake, but the interests of our country."

Ned walked briskly along until he came within sight of two soldiers standing at a point where the street branched. He now walked more slowly, stopping here and there offering his eggs to women standing at their doors, or going in or out. As he thought it better to effect a sale he asked rather lower prices than those Magdalene had given him, and disposed of three or four dozen before he reached the soldiers. They made no remark as he passed. He felt more confident now, and began to enter into the spirit of his part; and when one of a group of soldiers in front of a wine shop made some laughing remark to him he answered him pertly, and turned the laugh of the man's comrades against him.

On nearing the centre of the town he began his task of delivering the letters, choosing first those who resided in comparatively quiet streets. With the various burghers he had little trouble. If they were in their shops he

walked boldly in, and said to them, "I am the young woman from the village of Beerholt, whom you were expecting to see;" and in each case the burgher said at once, "It is my wife who has business with you," and led the way into the interior of the house. Ned's next question: "How is the wind blowing in Holland?" was answered by his being taken into a quiet room. The letter was then produced, and in each case an answer more or less satisfactory was given.

Ned found that there were a large number of men in Brussels ripe for a revolt, but that there was no great chance of the rising taking place until the Prince of Orange had gained some marked success, such as would encourage hopes that the struggle might in the end be successful. In three or four cases there were favourable answers to the appeals for funds, one burgher saying that he and his friends had subscribed between them a hundred thousand gulden, which they would forward by the first opportunity to a banker at Leyden. One said he found the prince's proclamations of absolute toleration for all religions produced a bad effect upon many of his friends, for that in Brabant they were as attached as ever to the Catholic religion, and would be loth to see Lutheran and Calvinist churches opened.

The last two letters that Ned had to deliver were to nobles, whose mansions were situated in the Grand Square. It was not easy to obtain access here. The lackeys would probably laugh in his face did he ask them to take his message to their master. By this time he had sold the greater part of his eggs, and he sat down, as if fatigued, on a door-step at a short distance from one of the mansions, and waited in the hope that he might presently see the noble with whom he had to do business issue out.

In half an hour two mounted lackeys rode up to the

door, one of them leading a horse. A short time afterwards a gentleman came out and mounted. He heard a bystander say to another, "There is the Count of Sluys." Ned got up, took his basket, and as the count came along crossed the road hurriedly just in front of his horse. As he did so he stumbled and fell, and a number of eggs rolled out on to the ground. There was a laugh among the bystanders, and the count reined in his horse.

"What possessed you to run like that under my horse's feet, my poor girl?" he asked, as Ned rose and began to cry loudly. Ned looked up in his face and rapidly said: "I am the person you expect from Beerholt."

The count gave a low exclamation of surprise, and Ned went on, "How does the wind blow in Holland?" The count deliberately felt in his pouch and drew out a coin, which he handed to Ned.

"Be at my back door in an hour's time. Say to the servant who opens it, 'I am the person expected.' He will lead you to me."

Then he rode forward, Ned pouring out voluble thanks for the coin bestowed upon him.

An hour later Ned went up a side street, in which was the door used by the servants and tradespeople of the count. A lackey was standing there. "I am the person expected," Ned said quietly to him. He at once led the way into the house and up some back stairs and passages, along a large corridor, then opening a door he motioned to Ned to enter.

CHAPTER X

A DANGEROUS ENCOUNTER

THE Count of Sluys was sitting at a table covered with papers.

"You have chosen a strange disguise," he said with a smile.

"It is none of my choosing," Ned replied. "I came into the city in the dress of a peasant boy, but was arrested by Councillor Von Aert, and had I not made my escape should probably have by this time been hung."

"Are you the lad for whom such a search has been made?" the count asked in surprise. "Von Aert is so furious he can talk about nothing else, and all the world is laughing at his having been tricked by a boy. Had I known that it was the prince's messenger I should not have felt inclined to laugh; thinking that papers, that would have boded me evil if discovered, might have been found upon him."

"They were found upon me," Ned replied; "but happily I recovered them. As they were not addressed, no one was any the wiser. This is the one intended for you, sir."

The count opened and read the document, and then gave Ned a long message to deliver to the prince. It contained particulars of his interviews with several other nobles, with details as to the number of men they could put in the field, and the funds they could dispose of in aid of the rising. Ned took notes of all the figures on a slip of paper, as he had done in several other instances. The count then asked him as to his arrest and manner

of escape, and laughed heartily when he found that Von Aert had himself by mistake returned the letters found upon Ned.

"I have delivered all but one," Ned said. "And that I know not how to dispose of, for it would be dangerous to play the same trick again."

"Who is the letter for?" the count asked. Ned hesitated; the noble to whom the letter was addressed was, like many others of the prince's secret adherents, openly a strong supporter of the Duke of Alva.

"Perhaps it is better not to tell me," the count said, seeing Ned's hesitation, "and I am glad to see that you are so discreet. But it can be managed in this way: Take a pen and go to that other table and write the address on the letter. I will call in my servant and tell him to take it from you and to deliver it at once, and ask for a reply to the person from Beerholt. That is, if that is the password to him also. He shall deliver the reply to you, and I will give you my promise that I will never ask him afterwards to whom he took the letter."

Ned felt that this would be the best course he could adopt, and addressed the letter at once. After the servant had gone the count chatted with Ned as to the state of affairs in Holland, and asked him many questions about himself. It was an hour and a half before the servant returned. He was advancing with the letter to the count, when the latter motioned to him to hand it to Ned.

"Is there nothing else that I can do for you?" he asked. "How do you intend to travel back through the country? Surely not in that dress?"

"No, sir; I was thinking of procuring another."

"It might be difficult for you to get one," the count said. "I will manage that for you;" and he again touched the bell. "Philip," he said to the lackey, "I need a suit of your clothes; a quiet plain suit, such as you would use

if you rode on an errand for me. Bring them here at once, and order a new suit for yourself. He is but little taller than you are," he went on when the man had retired, "and his clothes will, I doubt not, fit you. You have not got a horse, I suppose?"

"No, sir."

"Which way are you going back?"

"I shall take the Antwerp road."

"There is a clump of trees about three miles along that road," the count said. "Philip shall be there with a horse for you at any hour that you like to name."

"I thank you greatly, count. I will be there at nine in the morning. I shall sally out in my present dress, leave the road a mile or so from the town, and find some quiet place where I can put on the suit you have furnished me with, and then walk on to the wood."

"Very well; you shall find the horse there at that hour without fail. You are a brave lad, and have carried out your task with great discretion. I hope some day to see you again by the side of the Prince of Orange."

A minute later the lackey returned with a bundle containing the suit of clothes. Ned placed it in his basket.

"Good-bye, and a good journey," the count said. Ned followed the lackey down the stairs, and then made his way without interruption to his lodging.

"Welcome back," the countess exclaimed, as he entered. "How have you sped?"

"Excellently well, madam. I have delivered all the letters, and have obtained answers, in all cases but one, by word of mouth. That one is in writing; but I shall commit it to heart, and destroy it at once."

He opened the letter and read it. As he had expected, it was written with extreme caution, and in evidently a feigned hand; no names either of places or persons were

mentioned. The writer simply assured "his good cousin" of his good-will, and said that owing to the losses he had had in business from the troubled times, he could not say at present how much he could venture to aid him in the new business on which he had embarked.

After reading it through, Ned threw the paper into the fire.

"He did not feel sure as to whom he was writing," he said, "and feared treachery. However, as I have obtained nine answers, I need not mind if this last be but a poor one. Now, madam, I am ready to start at half-past seven in the morning."

Accordingly in the morning, after many thanks to the Countess Von Harp for her kindness, and the expression of his sincerest hope that they might meet again, either in England or Holland, Ned started on his way. On reaching one of the streets leading to the gate he fell in behind a group of country people, who, having early disposed of the produce they had brought to market, were making their way home. Among them was a lad of about his own age; and on reaching the gate two soldiers at once stepped forward and seized him, to the surprise and consternation of himself and his friends. The soldiers paid no heed to the outcry, but shouted to someone in the guard-house, and immediately a man whom Ned recognised as one of the warders who had attended him in prison came out.

"That is not the fellow," he said, after a brief look at the captive. "He is about the same age, but he is much fairer than our fellow, and in no way like him in face."

Ned did not wait to hear the result of the examination, but at once passed on out of the gate with the country people unconnected with the captive. A minute or two later the latter with his friends issued forth. Ned kept about half-way between the two parties until he reached

a lane branching off from the road in the direction in which he wished to go. Following this for a mile he came into the Ghent road, and had no difficulty in finding the place where he had hidden his money. Going behind a stack of corn, a short distance away, he changed his clothes; and pushing the female garments well into the stack, went on his way again. He retraced his steps until again on the road to Antwerp, and followed this until he came to the clump of trees. Here the count's servant was awaiting him with two horses. He smiled as Ned came up.

"If it had not been my own clothes you are wearing, I should not have known you again," he said. "The count bade me ask you if you had need of money? If so, I was to hand you this purse."

"Give my thanks to the count," Ned replied, "and say that I am well furnished."

"Not in all respects, I think," the man said.

Ned thought for a minute.

"No," he said. "I have no arms."

The man took a brace of pistols from the holsters of his own horse and placed them in those on Ned's saddle, and then unbuckled his sword-belt and handed it to Ned. "The count bade me give you these, and say he was sure you would use them well if there should be need."

Ned leaped into the saddle, and with sincere thanks to the man galloped off towards Antwerp. He reached the town without further incident. After putting up his horse at an hotel he sauntered out into the streets. Antwerp at that time was one of the finest and wealthiest towns in Europe. He stood in the great square admiring its beauties and those of the cathedral when he was conscious of someone staring fixedly at him, and he could scarce repress a start when he saw the malicious face of Genet, the clerk of Councillor Von Aert. His first

impulse was to fly, but the square was full of burghers, with many groups of Spanish soldiers sauntering about; he could not hope to escape.

He saw by the expression on Genet's face that as yet he was not sure of his identity. He had before seen him only as a country boy, and in his present attire his appearance was naturally a good deal changed. Still the fixed stare of the man showed that his suspicions were strongly aroused, and Ned felt sure that it would not be long before he completely recognised him. Turning the matter over rapidly in his mind he saw but one hope of escape. He sauntered quietly up to a group of soldiers.

"My friends," he said, "do you want to earn a few crowns?"

"That would we right gladly," one of them replied, "seeing that His Gracious Majesty has forgotten to pay us for well-nigh a year."

"There is a hang-dog villain with a squint, in a russet cloak and doublet, just behind me," Ned said. "I have had dealings with him, and know him and his master to be villains. He claims that I am in debt to his master, and it may be that it is true; but I have particular reasons for objecting to be laid by the heels for it just now."

"That is natural enough," the soldier said. "I have experienced the same unpleasantness, and can feel for you."

"See here, then," Ned said. "Here are ten crowns, which is two a-piece for you. Now, I want you to hustle against that fellow, pick a quarrel with him and charge him with assaulting you, and drag him away to the guard-house. Give him a slap on the mouth if he cries out, and throw him into a cell, and let him cool his heels there till morning. That will give me time to finish my business and be off again into the country."

"That can be managed easily enough," the soldier said with a laugh.

"Here is the money, then," Ned said; "but above all, as I have said, do not let him talk or cry out or make a tumult. Nip him tightly by the neck."

Ned sauntered quietly on. In a minute or two he heard a loud and sudden altercation, then there was the sound of blows, and looking round he saw two of the soldiers shaking Genet violently. The man endeavoured to shout to the crowd; but one of the soldiers smote him heavily on the mouth, and then surrounding him they dragged him away. "That is very satisfactorily done," Ned said to himself, "and it is by no means likely that Master Genet will get a hearing before tomorrow morning. Still I must not count too surely upon having time. I will mount my horse and ride on at once."

The ostler was somewhat surprised when Ned told him that he had changed his mind, and that, instead of remaining for the night at Antwerp, he should ride forward at once. As Ned paid him handsomely for the feed the horse had had he had no remark, and Ned mounted and rode out through the town by the gate which he had entered. Then he made a wide detour round the town, and rode on along the bank of the river until he came to a ferry. Here he crossed, and then rode on until he reached St. Nicholas. It was now nigh eleven o'clock at night. He dismounted, led his horse a distance from the road, fastened the reins to a bush, and then threw himself on the ground to wait for daylight. The night was cold, and a fine rain was falling. Ned got up from time to time and walked about to keep himself warm, and was heartily glad when he saw the first rays of daylight in the east.

After waiting for half an hour he mounted, and after riding a few miles entered a large village. Thinking that

it would be safer than at St. Nicholas, he halted here. It was still raining, and the drenched state of his clothes therefore excited no comment beyond the host's remark, "You must have started early to have got so wet?"

"Yes," he said; "I was up before daylight. How far am I from Ghent now?"

"If you have come from Antwerp, sir, you have come just half-way."

Ned changed his clothes and had some breakfast, and then as he sat by the fire the feeling of warmth and comfort after his long and cold night overpowered him, and he went fast to sleep.

CHAPTER XI

SAVING A VICTIM

NED slept for some hours. When he woke he heard the landlord talking in loud tones in the passage outside.

"I tell you, wife, it is a burning shame. Mynheer Von Bost has never done a soul harm in his life. His cloth-mill gives employment to half the village. What we shall do if it is shut up I am sure I don't know. But what do they care for the village. Mynheer Von Bost is a Protestant and a rich man—that is quite enough for the Blood Council; so he and his pretty young wife are to be dragged off and executed."

"What is that?" Ned asked, opening the door. "Can't the Blood Council even leave your quiet village alone?"

"They can leave nothing alone," the landlord said bitterly. "An hour ago four of their officials rode up, under one of the agents of the Council—a squint-eyed villain. They stopped at the door and asked for the house of Mynheer Von Bost, and then rode off, and half an hour afterwards one of the servants ran down into the village with the news that her master and mistress had been arrested, and that they were to be taken to Antwerp to be executed; for that, as it seems, they had already been tried without their knowing anything about it."

Ned started when the landlord described the leader of the party. This, then, accounted for Genet's presence at Antwerp; he had been sent from Brussels to arrest this cloth manufacturer. He had evidently succeeded in establishing his identity late in the evening or at early morning, and guessing that Ned would have ridden on

without loss of time after setting the soldiers on to assault him, had proceeded to carry out the mission with which he was charged.

"The villagers would tear the villain limb from limb if they dared," the landlord went on.

"Why don't they dare?" Ned asked.

"Why? Why, because we should be having a troop of soldiers down here in twenty-four hours, and the village would be burnt, and every man in it, and woman too, put to death. No, no, sir; the people here would do a good deal for Mynheer Von Bost and his wife, but they won't risk everything."

"Would they risk anything, do you think?" Ned asked.

"Are there half a dozen men in the village, do you think, who would strike a blow for their master, if they could do it without running this risk you speak of?"

The landlord looked at him sharply. "This is not the time, young sir, for men to speak before strangers about matters which may put their neck in danger."

"You are right," Ned said; "and I do not blame you for being discreet. I know this cross-eyed man you speak of, and know that he is the secretary of one of the most cruel and bloody of the Council; and it was but yesterday that I escaped from his hands almost by a miracle. And I would now, if I could, baffle the villain again. I suppose they are still at his house?"

"They are. They have ordered breakfast to be prepared for them, and it may be another hour before they set out."

"My plan is this, then," Ned said. "If I could get half a dozen determined men to join me, we would go back along the road towards Antwerp three miles or so, and lie in wait until they came along, and then rescue their prisoners from them. If we could get a horse for the man to ride with his wife behind him, all the better. We could

pretend to be robbers; there are plenty of starving peasants that have been driven to that, and if we attack them three miles away they would have no suspicion that the people of the village had any hand in it."

"I will see about it," the landlord said warmly. "When my son-in-law's little farm was burnt down last winter, Mynheer Van Bost advanced him money to rebuild it, and charged no interest. He lives but a quarter of a mile out of the village, and I think he will be your man, and would be able to lay his hands on the others. I will run over to him and be back in a quarter of an hour."

In the meantime Ned ordered his horse to be saddled, and when the landlord returned he was ready to start.

"My son-in-law will join you," he said. "He has two brothers whom he will bring with him. They both work in Van Bost's factory. He bids me tell you to go on for two miles, and to stop where the first road comes in on the right-hand side. They will join you there, and will then go on with you as far as you may think fit. They have got guns, so you can lie in ambush."

Ned shook the landlord's hand and rode off. He halted when he came to the point indicated. In less than half an hour he saw three men coming from the other direction. One of them was leading a horse. He at once rode on to meet them.

"We have made a detour through the fields," the young man leading the horse said. "It would not have done for anyone in the village to have seen us journeying this way."

"Quite right," Ned agreed. "There are babblers everywhere. Now, where had we best ambuscade?"

"There is a little wood by the roadside half a mile on."

Two of the men were armed with muskets, and all

three carried flails. They moved briskly forward until they got to the wood.

"You had best fasten up the horse among the trees," Ned said, "and then take your station close to the road. I will ride out from the trees as I come up and engage them in talk, so that you and your brother can take a steady aim. Don't fire until you are sure of each bringing down a man, then rush out and engage them with your flails. I will answer for their leader myself."

After seeing the horse tied up, and the men take their stations behind trees, Ned went a few yards further and then waited the coming of the party with the prisoners.

In about ten minutes the sound of horses' hoofs was heard. Ned waited till they came within a few paces, and then suddenly rode out from the wood. Genet, who was riding ahead of the others, reined in his horse suddenly.

"What are you doing, fellow?" he began angrily, "riding out thus suddenly upon us?" Then his voice changed as he recognised Ned. "What, is it you again?" he exclaimed. "This time at least you shall not escape me."

He drew a pistol and fired. Ned was equally quick, and the two shots rang out together. Ned's cap flew from his head, the bullet just grazing his skin, while Genet fell forward on his saddle and rolled to the ground, shot through the heart. Almost at the same instant two guns were discharged from the wood, and two of the officials fell. The other two, behind whom the prisoners were strapped, set spurs to their horses; but Ned rode in front of them, and the men dashing from the trees seized the reins.

"Surrender!" Ned shouted, "or you are dead men."

The two officers shouted lustily that they surrendered, but Ned had the greatest difficulty from preventing their

assailants from knocking out their brains with their flails.

"There is no plunder to be obtained from them, comrades," he said loudly. "They are only poor knaves riding behind their master. Get them off their horses, and strap their hands with their own belts, and toss them in among the trees; but you can search their pockets before you do so. I will see what their leader has got upon him."

As soon as the two prisoners were dragged away Ned addressed Mynheer Von Bost, who with his wife was standing almost bewildered by the sudden event that had freed them.

"This is no robbery, Mynheer, but a rescue. We have a horse and pillion here in the wood in readiness for you, and I should advise you to ride at once with your wife for Sluys or some other seaport, and thence take ship either into Holland or to England."

"But who are you, sir, who has done us this great service?"

"I am serving under the Prince of Orange," Ned replied; "and have been doing business for him at Brussels."

"May I ask your name, sir? My wife and I would like to know to whom we owe a lifelong debt of gratitude. I will take your advice and ride at once for Sluys. I have many friends there who will conceal us and get us on board a ship. My arrangements have long been made for departure, and my capital transferred to England; but I thought that I should have had sufficient notice of danger to take flight. Where can I hear of you, sir?"

'My name is Edward Martin. My father is an English captain, who resides at Rotherhithe, close by London. At present, as I said, I am in the service of the Prince of Orange; but my home is still in England. And now, sir, I think you had best be riding at once.'

The men had by this time brought out the horse. Von Bost mounted, and his wife was assisted on to the pillion behind him.

"Good-bye, good friends," he said. "God grant that no harm come to you for this kind deed."

The moment he had ridden off Ned and his companions lifted the bodies of the three men who had fallen and carried them into the wood.

"We had best turn their pockets inside out," Ned said, "and take away everything of value upon them."

"This fellow has a well-lined purse," the young farmer said as he examined the pocket of Genet; "and here are a bundle of papers in his doublet."

"Give me the papers," Ned said, "they may be useful to me, and doubtless they contain lists of other victims whom I may be able to send warning to in time for them to escape. Now, as to these two prisoners, they are the only trouble."

"You need not trouble about them," the farmer said, "we have made them safe. We were not going to risk our lives and those of our wives and families, as we should have done if we had left those fellows alive to identify us."

Ned could hardly blame the men, who had indeed stabbed their captives the instant they had dragged them among the trees, for doubtless the risk they would have run of detection would have been great had they permitted them to live. They had now only to regain their village without observation and to keep their own secret, to be free from all risk whatever. Putting Genet's papers in his doublet Ned again mounted his horse and rode off.

Two hours later he reached St. Nicholas. He could now have ridden straight on to Bergen-op-Zoom, the port at which he hoped to be able to find a boat, but he

thought that Genet's papers might contain matters upon which it might be necessary for him to act at once. He had now no fear of detection, for with the death of Genet all search for himself would be at an end. Putting up his horse at an inn he ordered a meal to be prepared at once, and calling for a flask of wine in the meantime, sat down at a table in the corner of the great parlour and examined the papers.

First there was a list of twelve names, among whom was that of Von Bost. One of these, as well as that of the manufacturer, had been crossed out. With them were official documents ordering the arrest of the persons named, together in most cases with that of their wives and one or more members of their family. Besides these was a document with the seal of the Council, ordering all magistrates and others to render every assistance required by the bearer in carrying out the duties with which he was charged.

Then there was a long list of persons resident in St. Nicholas, Sluys, and Axel, against whom denunciations of heresy or of suspected disloyalty to Philip had been laid. There was a note at the bottom of this list: "Inquire into the condition of life and probable means of each of these suspected persons."

"It is somewhat lucky for all these people," Ned said to himself, "that I happened to fall in with Mynheer Genet. I see there are three orders of arrest against people here, and ten names on the suspected list. I can warn them myself."

As soon as he had finished his meal Ned inquired the addresses of the three persons ordered to be arrested. They were all, as he had expected, leading men in the place; for it was the confiscation of the goods of the victims, quite as much as any question of religion or loyalty, that was at the bottom of a large proportion of

the arrests and executions. He called on all three and told them of the danger, and discussed with them the manner in which they had best make their escape.

One he found had friends and business connections in Sluys, and doubted not that he could obtain a passage there to Holland or England, while another had similar connections in Axel. Ned handed over to them the orders for the arrest of burghers of those towns, and these they gave him their promise to deliver, and also either to see or to send letters warning all the persons who were mentioned in the list of suspected. As he was anxious to get on as soon as possible he also gave them the list of the suspected at St. Nicholas, and these they promised also to warn. Having thus concluded his business, Ned again mounted his horse and rode for the port of Bergen-op-Zoom, where he was able to embark for Rotterdam.

CHAPTER XII

BACK WITH THE PRINCE

REACHING Rotterdam, and learning that the Prince of Orange had just returned from a trip to Haarlem and some other towns, Ned at once made his way to the house he occupied.

"Well, my brave lad, so you have returned," the prince said as Ned entered. "I have blamed myself many times for letting you go upon so dangerous a mission, and I am glad indeed to see that you have safely returned, even if you have failed altogether touching the matter on which you went."

"I thought more of the honour than of the danger of the mission you intrusted to me, your excellency," Ned replied, "and am happy to say that I have fulfilled it successfully, and have brought you back messages by word of mouth from all, save one, of those to whom your letters were addressed."

"Say you so!" the prince exclaimed in tones of satisfaction. "Then you have indeed done well. And how fared it with you on your journey? Did you deliver the letters and return here without suspicion falling upon you?"

"No, sir. I have run some slight risk and danger owing to an unfortunate meeting with Councillor Von Aert, who was of a more suspicious nature than his countrymen in general; but I will not occupy your excellency's time by talking about myself, but will deliver the various messages with which I am charged."

He then went through the particulars of his interviews

with each of the nine persons he had visited, and gave the contents of the letter, word for word, he had received from the tenth, excusing himself for not having brought the message by word of mouth, owing to the difficulty of obtaining a private audience with him. He also produced the paper upon which he had jotted down all the particulars of the men and money that had been confided to him.

"Your news might be better, and worse," the prince said when he had concluded. "Some of these men doubtless are, as they say, zealous in the cause, others are not to be largely trusted in extremities. The money they promise is less than I had hoped. The numbers of the men who can be relied upon to rise are satisfactory, and more even than I had hoped for; for in matters like this a man must proceed cautiously, and only sound those upon whom he feels sure beforehand he can rely. The worst of it is, they are all waiting for each other. One will move if another will move, but none will be first. They will move if I get a victory. But how can I win a victory when I have no army nor money to raise one, and when each city will fight only in its own defence, and will not put a man under arms for the common cause?"

As the prince was evidently speaking to himself rather than to him, Ned remained silent. "Please to write all the particulars down that you have given me," the prince went on, "that I may think it over at my leisure. And so you could not see the Count of Coeverden? Was he more difficult of access than he of Sluys?"

"I do not know that he was, sir," Ned replied; "but my attire was not such as to gain me an entrance into ante-chambers. Being eagerly sought for by Von Aert's agents, I was at the time dressed as a peasant woman, and could think of no possible excuse upon which I might obtain an audience with the count."

"No, indeed," the prince said smiling. "I must hear your story with all its details; but as it is doubtless long, I must put it off until later."

For the next fortnight Ned was employed carrying messages from the prince to various towns and ports. Alva was at Amsterdam, and the army under his son, Don Frederick, was marching in that direction on their way from Zutphen. They came down upon the little town of Naarden on the coast of the Zuider-Zee. A troop of a hundred men was sent forward to demand its surrender. The burghers answered that they held the town for the king and the Prince of Orange, and a shot was fired at the troopers. Having thus committed themselves, the burghers sent for reinforcements and aid to the Dutch towns, but none were sent them, and when the Spaniards approached on the 1st of December they sent out envoys to make terms. The army marched forward and encamped a mile and half from the town.

A large deputation was sent out and was met by General Romero, who informed them that he was commissioned on the part of Don Frederick to treat with them. He demanded the keys, and gave them a solemn pledge that the lives and properties of all the inhabitants should be respected. The gates were thrown open, and Romero with five hundred soldiers entered. A sumptuous feast was prepared for them by the inhabitants. After this was over the citizens were summoned by the great bell to assemble in the church that was used as a town hall. As soon as they assembled the soldiers attacked them and killed them all. The town was then set on fire, and almost every man, woman, and child killed. Don Frederick forbade that the dead should be buried, and issued orders forbidding anyone, on pain of death, to give shelter to the few fugitives who had got away. The few houses which had escaped the flames were

levelled to the ground, and Naarden ceased to exist.

Great as the horrors perpetrated at Zutphen had been, they were surpassed by the atrocities committed at Naarden. The news of this horrible massacre, so far from frightening the Hollanders into submission, nerved them to even more strenuous resistance. Better death in whatsoever form it came than to live under the rule of these foul murderers. With the fall of Naarden there remained only the long strip of land facing the sea, and connected at but a few points with the mainland, that remained faithful to the cause of freedom. The rest of the Netherlands lay cowed beneath the heel of the Spaniards. Holland alone and a few of the islands of Zeeland remained to be conquered.

The inhabitants of Holland felt the terrible danger; and Bossu, Alva's stadtholder, formally announced that the system pursued at Mechlin, Zutphen, and Naarden was the deliberate policy of the government, and that man, woman and child would be exterminated in every city which opposed the Spanish authority.

The day after the news arrived of the fall of Naarden Ned received a letter from his father, saying that the *Good Venture* was again at Enkhuizen, and that she would in two days start for Haarlem with a fleet of Dutch vessels; that he himself had made great progress in the last six weeks, and should return to England in her; and that if Ned found that he could get away for a day or two he should be glad to see him.

The prince at once gave Ned permission to leave, and as he had an excellent horse at his service he started the next morning at daybreak and arrived at Enkhuizen before nightfall. He was received with great joy by his family, and was delighted to find his father looking quite himself again.

"Yes, thanks to good nursing and good food, my boy, I

feel almost strong and well enough to take my post at the helm of the *Good Venture* again. The doctor tells me that in another couple of months I shall be able to have a wooden leg strapped on, and to stump about again. That was a rare adventure you had at Brussels, Ned; and you must give us a full account of it presently. In the morning you must come on board the vessel, Peters and the crew will be all glad to see you again."

Ned stayed two days with his family. On the evening of the second day he said to his father: "I should like to make the trip to Haarlem and back, father, in the *Good Venture*. It may be that the Spaniards will sally out from Amsterdam and attack it. Last time we had to run away, you know; but if there is a sea-fight I should like to take my part in it."

"Very well, Ned, I have no objection; but I hardly think that there will be a fight. The Spaniards are too strong, and the fleet will start so as to pass through the strait by night."

"Well, at any rate I should like to be on board the *Good Venture* again if only for the sail down and back again," Ned said. "They are to sail at three o'clock tomorrow, so that if the wind is fair they will pass the strait at night and anchor under the walls of Haarlem in the morning. I suppose they will be two days discharging their cargo of food and grain, and one reason why I want to go is that I may if possible persuade my aunt and the two girls to return with me and to sail for England with you. All think that Haarlem will be the next place besieged, and after what had taken place in the other towns it would be madness for my aunt to stop there."

"I quite agree with you, Ned. The duke is sure to attack Haarlem next. If he captures it he will cut Holland in two and strike a terrible blow at the cause.

Your mother shall write a letter tonight to her sister-in-law urging her to come with us, and take up her abode in England till these troubles are over. As you say, it is madness for her to remain in Holland with her two girls. Were I a burgher of that town I would send my family away to Leyden or Dort and stay myself to defend the walls to the last, but I do not believe that many will do so: Your countrymen are obstinate people, Sophie, and I fear that few will send their families away."

Upon the following afternoon Ned started with the little fleet. The wind was fair and light, and they reached the mouth of the strait leading from the Zuider-Zee to Haarlem. Then suddenly the wind dropped and the vessels cast anchor. For the two or three days previous the weather had been exceedingly cold, and with the fall of the wind the frost seemed to increase in severity, and Ned, who had been pacing the deck with Peters chatting over what had happened since they last met, was glad to go into the cabin, where the new first mate and supercargo had retired as soon as the anchor was let go. They sat talking for a couple of hours until a sailor came in, and said that they were hailed by the nearest ship. They all went on deck. Ned shouted to know what was the matter.

"Do you not see that the water is freezing? By morning we shall be all frozen up hard and fast."

This was startling news indeed, for they were now in full sight of Amsterdam, and would, if detained thus, be open to an attack across the ice.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SIEGE OF HAARLEM

THERE was much shouting in the little fleet as the news spread that the sea was freezing. Boats were lowered and rowed from ship to ship, for the ice was as yet no thicker than window glass. Ned went from the *Good Venture* to the craft round which most of the boats were assembling to hear what was decided. He returned in a few minutes.

"They are all of opinion that it is hopeless for us to get out of this. We could tow the vessels a short distance, but every hour the ice will thicken. They concluded that anchors shall be got up, and that the ships all lie together as close as they pack."

"What will be the use of that?" Peters asked. "If we are to be frozen up it makes no difference that I can see, whether we are together or scattered as at present."

"The idea is," Ned said, "that if we are packed together we can defend ourselves better than if scattered about, and what is more important still, we can cut through the ice and keep a channel of open water round us."

"So we could," Peters agreed. "Let us to work then. Which ship are we to gather round?"

"The one I have just left, Peters; she is lying nearly in the centre."

For the next two hours there was much bustle and hard work. Thin as the ice was it yet greatly hindered the operation of moving the ships. As last they were all packed closely together. As there was now no motive for

concealment, lamps were shown and torches burned. There were thirty craft in all, and they were arranged in five lines closely touching each other. When all was done the crews retired to rest.

"This is a curious position," Ned said, as he went on deck next morning. "How long do you think we are likely to be kept here, Peters?"

"Maybe twenty-fours hours, maybe three weeks, lad. These frosts when they set in like this seldom last less than a fortnight or three weeks. What do you think of our chances of being attacked?"

"I should say they are sure to attack us. The whole Spanish army is lying over there in Amsterdam, and as soon as the ice is strong enough to bear them you will see them coming out. How strong a force can we muster?"

"There are thirty craft," Peters replied; "and I should think they average fully fifteen men each—perhaps twenty."

"That would give from five to six hundred men. I suppose all carry arms?"

"Oh, yes. I do not suppose that there is a man here who has not weapons of some kind, and most of them have arquebuses. It will take a strong force to carry this wooden fort."

It was still freezing intensely, and the ice was strong enough to bear men scattered here and there, although it would not have sustained them gathered together. Towards the afternoon the captain judged that it had thickened sufficiently to begin work, and fifty or sixty men provided with hatchets got upon the ice and proceeded to break it away round the vessels. After a couple of hours a fresh party took their places, and by nightfall the ships were surrounded by a belt of open water, some fifteen yards wide.

A meeting of the captains had been held during the

day, and the most experienced had been chosen at leader, with five lieutenants under him. Each lieutenant was to command the crews of six ships. When it became dark five boats were lowered. These were to row round and round the ships all night so as to keep the water from freezing again. The crews were to be relieved once an hour, so that each ship would furnish a set of rowers once in six hours. Numerous anchors had been lowered when the ships were first packed together, so as to prevent the mass from drifting when tide flowed or ebbed, as this would have brought them in contact with one side or the other of the ice around them. The next morning the ice was found to be five inches thick, and the captains were of opinion that the Spaniards might now attempt an attack upon them.

"Their first attack will certainly fail," Ned said, as they sat at breakfast. "They will be baffled by this water belt round us. However, they will come next time with rafts ready to push across it, and then we shall have fighting in earnest."

The lieutenant under whom the crew of the *Good Venture* were placed, came down while they were at breakfast to inquire how many arquebuses there were on board.

"We have ten," the captain said.

"As I suppose you have no men who skate on board, I should be glad if you will hand them over to me."

"What does he say?" the first mate asked in surprise upon this being translated to him. "What does he mean by asking if we have any men who skate, and why should we give up our guns if we can use them ourselves?" Ned put the questions to the lieutenant.

"We are going to attack them on the ice as they come out," he replied. "Of course all our vessels have skates on board; in winter we always carry them, as we may be

frozen up at any time. And we shall send out as many men as can be armed with arquebuses; those who remain on board will fight the guns."

"That is a capital plan," Ned said; "and the Spanish, who are unaccustomed to ice, will be completely puzzled. It is lucky there was not a breath of wind when it froze, and the surface is as smooth as glass. Well, there will be nine arquebuses for you, sir; for I have been out here two winters and have learnt to skate, so I will accompany the party, the other nine arquebuses with ammunition we will hand over to you."

A look-out at one of the mastheads now shouted that he could make out a black mass on the ice near Amsterdam, and believed that it was a large body of troops. Every preparation had already been made on board the ships for the fight. The *Good Venture* lay on the outside tier facing Amsterdam, having been placed there because she carried more guns than any of the other vessels, which were for the most part small, and few carried more than four guns, while the armament of the *Good Venture* had, after her fight with the *Don Pedro*, been increased to ten guns. The guns from the vessels in the inner tiers had all been shifted on to those lying outside, and the wooden fort literally bristled with cannon.

A quarter of an hour after the news that the Spaniards were on their way had been given, three hundred men with arquebuses were ferried across the channel, and were disembarked on to the ice. They were divided into five companies of sixty men each, under the lieutenants; the captain remained to superintend the defence of the ships. The Dutch sailors were as much at home on their skates as upon dry land, and in high spirits started to meet the enemy.

It was two miles from the spot where the ships lay frozen—up to Amsterdam. The Spaniards, a thousand

strong, had traversed about a third of the distance when the skaters approached them. Keeping their feet with the utmost difficulty upon the slippery ice, they were astonished at the rapid approach of the Dutchmen. Breaking up as they approached, their assailants came dashing along at a rapid pace, discharged their arquebuses into the close mass of the Spaniards, and then wheeled away at the top of their speed, reloaded and again swept down to fire.

Against these tactics the Spaniards could do little. Unsteady as they were on their feet the recoil of their heavy arquebuses frequently threw them over, and it was impossible to take anything like an accurate aim at the flying figures that passed them at the speed of a galloping horse. Nevertheless they doggedly kept on their way, leaving the ice behind them dotted with killed and wounded. Not a gun was discharged from on board the ships until the head of the Spanish column reached the edge of the water, and discovered the impassable obstacle that lay between them and the vessels. Then the order was given to fire, and the head of the column was literally swept away by the discharge.

The commander of the Spaniards now gave the order for a retreat. As they fell back the guns of the ships swept their ranks, the musketeers harassed them on each flank, the ice, cracked and broken by the artillery fire, gave way under their feet, and many fell through and were drowned, and of the thousand men who left Amsterdam less than half regained that city. The Spaniards were astonished at this novel mode of fighting, and the despatches of their officers gave elaborate descriptions of the strange appendages that had enabled the Hollanders to glide so rapidly over the ice. The Spaniards were, however, always ready to learn from a foe. Alva immediately ordered eight thousand pairs of skates, and the

soldiers were kept hard at work practising until they were able to make their way with fair rapidity over the ice.

The evening after the fight a strong wind suddenly sprang up from the south-west, and the rain descended in torrents. By morning the ice was already broken up, the guns were hastily shifted to the vessels to which they belonged, the ships on the outside tiers cast off from the others, and before noon the whole were on their way back towards Enkhuizen, which they reached without pursuit by the Spanish vessels; for at nine in the morning the wind changed suddenly again, the frost set in as severely as before, and the Spaniards in the port of Amsterdam were unable to get out. This event caused great rejoicing in Holland, and was regarded as a happy omen for the coming contest.

After remaining another day with his family, Ned mounted his horse and rode to Haarlem. The city lay at the narrowest point of the narrow strip of land facing the German Ocean, and upon the shore of the shallow lake of the same name. Upon the opposite side of this lake, ten miles distant, stood the town of Amsterdam. The Lake of Haarlem was separated from the long inlet of the Zuider-Zee called the Y by a narrow strip of land, along which ran the causeway connecting the two cities. Half-way along this neck of land there was a cut, with sluice works, by which the surrounding country could be inundated. The port of Haarlem on the Y was at the village of Sparendam, where there was a fort for the protection of the shipping.

Haarlem was one of the largest cities of the Netherlands; but it was also one of the weakest. The walls were old, and had never been formidable. The extent of the defences made a large garrison necessary; but the force available for the defence was small indeed. Upon his way

towards Haarlem Ned learnt that on the night before, the 10th of December, Sparendam had been captured by the Spaniards. A secret passage across the flooded and frozen meadows had been shown to them by a peasant, and they had stormed the fort, killed three hundred men, and taken possession of the works and village. Thus Haarlem was at once cut off from all aid coming from the Zuider-Zee.

Much disquieted by the news, Ned rode on rapidly and entered the town by a gate upon the southern side; for, as he approached, he learned that the Spaniards had already appeared in great force before the city. He rode at once to his aunt's house, hoping to find that she had already left the town with the girls. Leaping from his horse he entered the door hurriedly, and was dismayed to find his aunt seated before the fire knitting.

"My dear aunt!" he exclaimed, "do you know that the Spaniards are in front of the town? Surely to remain here with the two girls is madness!"

"Every one else is remaining, why should not I, Ned?" his aunt asked calmly.

"Other people have their houses and their businesses, aunt, but you have nothing to keep you here. You know what has happened at Zutphen and Naarden. How can you expose the girls, even if you are so obstinate yourself, to such horrors?"

"The burghers are determined to hold out until relief comes, nephew."

"Ay, if they can," Ned replied. "But who knows whether they can. This is madness, aunt. I beseech you come with me to your father, and let us talk over the matter with him; and in the morning, if you will not go, I will get two horses and mount the girls on them, and ride with them to Leyden—that is, if by morning it is not already too late. It would be best to proceed at once."

Dame Plomaert reluctantly yielded to the energy of her nephew, and accompanied him to the house of her father; but the weaver was absent on the walls, and did not return until late in the evening. Upon Ned's putting the case to him, he at once agreed that it would be best both for her and the girls to leave.

"I have told her so twenty times already," he said; "but Elizabeth was always as obstinate as a mule. By all means, lad, get them away first thing in the morning."

Ned at once sallied out, and without much difficulty succeeded in bargaining for three horses for few of the inhabitants had left, and horses would not only be of no use during the siege, but it would be impossible to feed them. When he reached the house he found that his aunt had made up three bundles with clothes and what jewellery she had, and that she was ready to start with the girls in the morning.

Before daybreak Ned went out to the walls on the south side, but as the light broadened out discovered that it was too late. During the night heavy reinforcements had arrived to Don Frederick from Amsterdam, and a large force was already facing the west side of the city.

With a heavy heart he returned to his aunt's with the news that it was too late, for that all means of exit was closed. Dame Plomaert took the news philosophically.

"Well, nephew," she said placidly, "if we cannot get away, we cannot; and it really saves a world of trouble. But what are you going to do yourself? for I suppose if we cannot get away, you cannot."

"The way is open across the lake," Ned replied, "and I shall travel along the ice to the upper end and then over to Leyden, and obtain permission from the prince to return here by the same way; or if not, to accompany the force he is raising there, for this will doubtless march

at once to the relief of the town. Even now, aunt, you might make your escape across the ice."

"I have not skated since I was fifteen years old," the good woman said placidly; "and at my age and weight I am certainly not going to try now, Ned."

"But the girls can skate," he urged.

"The girls are girls," she said decidedly; "and I am not going to let them run about the world by themselves. You say yourself that reinforcements will soon start. You do not know our people, nephew. They will beat off the Spaniards. Whatever they do, the city will never be taken."

Ned shrugged his shoulders in despair, and went out to see what were the preparations for defence. The garrison consisted only of some fifteen hundred German mercenaries and the burgher force. Ripperda, the commandant of the garrison, was an able and energetic officer. The townspeople were animated by a determination to resist to the end. A portion of the magistracy had, in the first place, been anxious to treat, and had entered into secret negotiations with Alva, sending three of their number to treat with the duke at Amsterdam. One had remained there; the other two on their return were seized, tried and executed, and Sainte Aldegonde, one of the prince's ministers, had been dispatched by him to make a complete change in the magistracy.

The total force available for the defence of the town was not, at the commencement of the siege, more than 3,000 men, while over 30,000 Spaniards were gathering round its walls, a number equal to the entire population of the city.

The Germans, under Count Overstein, finally took up their encampment in the extensive grove of trees that spread between the southern walls and the shore of the lake.

The Spaniards, under Don Frederick, faced the north walls, while the Walloons and other regiments closed it in on the east and west. But these arrangements occupied some days; and the mists which favoured their movements were not without advantage to the besieged. Under cover of the fog supplies of provisions and ammunition were brought by men and women and even children, on their heads or in sledges down the frozen lake, and in spite of the efforts of the besiegers introduced into the city.

Ned was away only two days. The prince approved of his desire to take part in the siege, and furnished him with letters to the magistrates promising reinforcements, and to Ripperda recommending Ned as a young gentleman volunteer of great courage and quickness. His cousins were delighted to see him back. The garrison, increased by arrivals from without and by the enrolment of every man capable of bearing arms, now numbered a thousand pioneers, three thousand fighting men, and three hundred fighting women.

The last were not the least efficient portion of the garrison. All were armed with sword, musket, and dagger, and were led by Kanau Hasselaer, a widow of distinguished family, who at the head of her female band took part in many of the fiercest fights of the siege, both upon and without the walls.

The siege commenced badly. In the middle of December the force of some 3,500 men assembled at Leyden set out under the command of De la Marck, the former admiral of the sea beggars. The troops were attacked on their march by the Spaniards, and a thousand were killed, a number taken prisoners, and the rest routed.

On the 18th of December Don Frederick's batteries opened fire upon the northern side, and the fire was kept

up without intermission for three days. As soon as the first shot was fired, a crier going round the town summoned all to assist in repairing the damages as fast as they were made.

The whole population responded to the summons. Men, women, and children brought baskets of stones and earth, bags of sand and beams of wood, and these they threw into the gaps as fast as they were made. The churches were stripped of all their stone statues, and these too were piled in the breaches.

At the end of three days' cannonade the breach, in spite of the efforts of the besieged, was practicable, and a strong storming party led by General Romero advanced against it. As the column was seen approaching the church bells rang out the alarm, the citizens caught up their arms, and men and women hurried to the threatened point. As they approached the Spaniards were received with a heavy fire of musketry; but with their usual gallantry the veterans of Spain pressed forward and began to mount the breach. Now they were exposed not only to the fire of the garrison, but to the missiles thrown by the burghers and women. Heavy stones, boiling oil, and live coals were hurled down upon them; small hoops smeared with pitch and set on fire were dexterously thrown over their heads, and after a vain struggle, in which many officers were killed and wounded, Romero, who had himself lost an eye in the fight, called off his troops and fell back from the breach, leaving from three to four hundred dead behind him, while but a half dozen of the townsmen lost their lives.

The besieged were not content to remain shut up in the walls, but frequently sallied out and engaged in skirmishes with the enemy. Prisoners were therefore often captured by one side or the other, and the gibbets on the walls and in the camp were constantly occupied.

Ned as a volunteer was not attached to any special body of troops, Ripperda telling him to act for himself and join in whatever was going on as he chose. Consequently he took part in many of the skirmishes outside the walls, and was surprised to find how fearlessly the burghers met the tried soldiers of Spain, and especially at the valour with which the corps of women battled with the enemy.

"Look here, aunt," Ned said at last to Frau Plomaert, "you must see for yourself now that the chances are that sooner or later the town will be captured. We may beat off all the assaults of the Spaniards, but we shall ere long have to fight with an even more formidable foe within the town. You know that our stock of provisions is small, and that in the end unless help comes we must yield to famine. I think that while there is time we ought to set to work to construct a hiding-place, where you and the girls can remain while the sack and atrocities that will assuredly follow the surrender of the town are taking place."

"I shall certainly not hide myself from the Spaniards," Frau Plomaert said stoutly.

"Very well, aunt, if you choose to be killed on your own hearth-stone of course I cannot prevent it; but I do say that you ought to save the girls from these horrors if you can."

"That I am ready to do," she said. "But how is it to be managed?"

"Well, aunt, there is your wood-cellar below. We can surely construct some place of concealment there. Of course I will do the work, though the girls might help by bringing up baskets of earth and scattering them in the streets." Having received a tacit permission from his aunt, Ned went down into the wood-cellar, which was some five feet wide by eight feet long. Like every place

about a Dutch house it was whitewashed, and was half full of wood. Ned climbed over the wood to the further end.

"This is where it must be," he said to the girls who had followed him. "Now, the first thing to do is to pile the wood so as to leave a passage by which we can pass along. I will get a pick and get out the bricks at this corner."

"We need only make a hole a foot wide, and it need not be more than a foot high," Lucette, the elder, said. "That will be sufficient for us to squeeze through."

"It would, Lucette; but we shall want more space for working, so to begin with we will take away the bricks up to the top. We can close it up as much as we like afterwards."

Accordingly the work began, the bricks were removed, and with a pick and shovel Ned dug into the ground beyond, while the girls carried away the earth and scattered it in the road. In a fortnight a chamber five feet high, three feet wide, and six feet long had been excavated. Slats of wood, supported by props along the sides, held up the roof. A quantity of straw was thrown in for the girls to lie on. Frau Plomaert came down from time to time to inspect the progress of the work, and expressed herself well pleased with it.

"How are you going to close the entrance, Ned?" she asked.

"I propose to brick it up again three feet high, aunt. Then when the girls and you have gone in—for I hope that you will change your mind at the last—I will brick up the rest of it, but using mud instead of mortar, so that the bricks can be easily removed when the time comes, or one or two can be taken out to pass in food, and then replaced as before. After you are in I will whitewash the whole cellar, and no one would then guess the wall had ever been disturbed. I shall leave two bricks out in the

bottom row of all to give air. They will be covered over by the wood. However hard up we get for fuel we can leave enough to cover the floor at that end a few inches deep. If I can I will pierce a hole up under the boards in the room above this, so as to give a free passage of air."

"If the Spaniards take away the wood, as they may well do, they will notice that the two bricks are gone," Mrs. Plomaert objected.

"We can provide for that, aunt, by leaving two bricks inside, whitewashed like the rest, to push into the holes if you hear anyone removing the wood. There is only the light that comes in at the door, and it would never be noticed that the two bricks were loose."

CHAPTER XIV

THE FALL OF HAARLEM

AFTER the terrible repulse inflicted upon the storming party, Don Frederick perceived that the task before him was not to be accomplished with the ease and rapidity he had anticipated. He therefore concentrated a steady fire against a work called a ravelin, protecting the gate of the Cross.

A month had elapsed since the repulse of the attack on the breach. During this time letters had from time to time been brought into the town by carrier-pigeons, the prince urging the citizens to persevere, and holding out hopes of relief.

These promises were to some extent fulfilled on the 28th of January, when 400 veteran soldiers, bringing with them 170 sledges laden with powder and bread, crossed the frozen lake and succeeded in making their way into the city. The time was now at hand when the besieged foresaw that the ravelin of the Cross gate could not much longer be defended. But they had been making preparations for this contingency. All through the long nights of January the non-combatants, old men, women, and children, aided by such of the fighting men as were not worn out by their work on the walls or underground, laboured to construct a wall in the form of a half moon on the inside of the threatened point.

Nightly Ned went down with his aunt and cousins and worked side by side with them. The houses near the new work were all levelled in order that the materials should be utilized for the construction of the wall, which was

built of solid masonry. The small stones were carried by the children and younger girls in baskets, the heavier ones dragged on hand sledges by the men and women. Frau Plomaert worked sturdily, and Ned was often surprised at her strength; but it seemed to Ned that under these exertions she visibly decreased in weight from day to day, and indeed the scanty supply of food upon which the work had to be done was ill calculated to support the strength of those engaged upon such fatiguing labour. For from the commencement of the siege the whole population had been rationed, all the provisions in the town had been handed over to the authorities for equal division, and every house, rich and poor, had been rigorously searched to see that none were holding back supplies for their private consumption. Many of the cattle and horses had been killed and salted down, and a daily distribution of food was made to each household according to the number of mouths it contained.

Furious at the successful manner in which the party had entered the town on the 28th January, Don Frederick kept up for the next few days a terrible cannonade against the gates of the Cross and of St. John, and the wall connecting them. At the end of that time the wall was greatly shattered, part of St. John's gate was in ruins, and an assault was ordered to take place at midnight. So certain was he of success that Don Frederick ordered the whole of his forces to be under arms opposite all the gates of the city, to prevent the population making their escape. A chosen body of troops were to lead the assault, and at midnight these advanced silently against the breach. The besieged had no suspicion that an attack was intended, and there were but some forty men, posted rather as sentries than guards, at the breach.

These, however when the Spaniards advanced, gave

the alarm, the watchers in the churches sounded the tocsin, and the sleeping citizens sprang from their beds, seized their arms, and ran towards the threatened point. Unawed by the overwhelming force advancing against them the sentries took their places at the top of the breach, and defended it with such desperation that they kept their assailants at bay until assistance arrived, when the struggles assumed a more equal character. The citizens defended themselves by the same means that had before proved successful, boiling oil and pitch, stones, flaming hoops, torches, and missiles of all kinds were hurled down by them upon the Spaniards, while the garrison defended the breach with sword and pike and axe.

Until daylight the struggle continued, and Philip then ordered the whole of his force to advance to the assistance of the storming party. A tremendous attack was made upon the ravelin in front of the gate of the Cross. It was successful, and the Spaniards rushed exultingly into the work, believing that the city was now at their mercy. Then, to their astonishment, they saw that they were confronted by the new wall, whose existence they had not even suspected. While they were hesitating a tremendous explosion took place. The citizens had undermined the ravelin and placed a store of powder there; and this was now fired, and the work flew into the air, with all the soldiers who had entered.

The retreat was sounded at once, and the Spaniards fell back to their camp; and thus a second time the burghers of Haarlem repulsed an assault by an overwhelming force under the best generals of Spain. The effect of these failures was so great that Don Frederick resolved not to risk another defeat, but to abandon his efforts to capture the city by assault, and to resort to the slow but sure process of famine.

At the end of February the frost suddenly broke up; in a few days the ice on the lake disappeared, and spring set in. Count Bossu, who had been building a fleet of small vessels in Amsterdam, cut a breach through the dyke and entered the lake, thus entirely cutting off communications. The Prince of Orange on his part was building ships at the other end of the lake, and was doing all in his power for the relief of the city.

On the 28th of May the two fleets met in desperate fight. Admiral Bossu had a hundred ships, most of considerable size. Martin Brand, who commanded the Dutch, had a hundred and fifty, but of much smaller size. The ships grappled with each other, and for hours a furious contest raged. Several thousands of men were killed on both sides, but at length weight prevailed and the victory was decided in favour of the Spaniards. Twenty-two of the Dutch vessels were captured and the rest routed. The Spanish fleet now sailed towards Haarlem, landed their crews, and joined by a force from the army, captured the forts the Dutch had erected and had hitherto held on the shore of the lake, and through which their scanty supplies had hitherto been received.

From the walls of the city the inhabitants watched the conflict, and a wail of despair rose from them as they saw its issue. They were now entirely cut off from all hope of succour, and their fate appeared to be sealed. Nevertheless they managed to send a message to the prince that they would hold out for three weeks longer in hopes that he might devise some plan for their relief, and carrier-pigeons brought back word that another effort should be made to save them. But by this time the magazines were empty. Hitherto one pound of bread had been served out daily to each man and half a pound to each woman, and on this alone they had for many weeks subsisted; but the

flour was now exhausted, and henceforth it was a battle with starvation.

Every living creature that could be used as food was slain and eaten. Grass and herbage of all kinds were gathered and cooked for food, and under cover of darkness parties sallied out from the gates to gather grass in the fields. The sufferings of the besieged were terrible. So much were they reduced by weakness that they could scarce drag themselves along the streets, and numbers died from famine.

During the time that the supply of bread was served out Ned had persuaded his aunt and the girls to put by a morsel of their food each day.

"It will be the only resource when the city surrenders," he said. "For four or five days at least the girls must remain concealed, and during that time they must be fed. If they take in with them a jar of water and a supply of those crusts, which they can eat soaked in the water, they can maintain life."

And so each day, as long as the bread lasted, a small piece was put aside until a sufficient store was accumulated to last the two girls for a week. Soon after the daily issue ceased Frau Plomaert placed the bag of crusts into Ned's hand's.

"Take it away and hide it somewhere," she said; "and do not let me know where you have put it, or we shall assuredly break into it and use it before the time comes."

It was fortunate for the girls that there was no necessity to go out of doors, for the sights there would have shaken the strongest. Men, women, and children fell dead by scores in the streets, and the survivors had neither strength nor heart to carry them away and bury them. On the 1st of July the burghers hung out a flag of truce, and deputies went out to confer with Don Frederick.

The latter, however, would grant no terms whatever, and they returned to the city. Two days later a tremendous cannonade was opened upon the town, and the walls broken down in several places, but the Spaniards did not advance to the assault, knowing that the town could not hold out many days longer. Finally Don Frederick sent a letter to the magistrates, in the name of Count Overstein, commander of the German forces in the besieging army, giving a solemn assurance that if they surrendered at discretion no punishment should be inflicted except upon those who, in the judgment of the citizens themselves, had deserved it.

At the moment of sending the letter Don Frederick was in possession of strict orders from his father not to leave a man alive of the garrison, with the exception of the Germans, and to execute a large number of the burghers. On the receipt of this letter the city formally surrendered on the 10th of July. The great bell was tolled, and orders were issued that all arms should be brought to the town hall, that the women should assemble in the cathedral and the men in the cloister of Zyl. Then Don Frederick with his staff rode into the city.

No time was lost in commencing the massacre. All the officers were at once put to death. The garrison had been reduced during the siege from 4,000 to 1,800. Of these the Germans—600 in number—were allowed to depart. The remaining 1,200 were immediately butchered, with at least as many of the citizens. Almost every citizen distinguished by service, station, or wealth was slaughtered, and from day to day five executioners were kept constantly at work. The city was not sacked, the inhabitants agreeing to raise a great sum of money as a ransom.

As soon as the surrender was determined upon, Ned

helped his cousins into the refuge prepared for them, passed in the bread and water, walled up the hole and whitewashed it, his aunt being too weak to render any assistance. Before they entered he opened the bag and took out a few crusts.

"You must eat something now, aunt," he said. "It may be a day or two before any food is distributed, and it is no use holding on so long to die of hunger when food is almost in sight. There is plenty in the bag to last the girls for a week."

The bread taken out was soaked, and it swelled so much in the water that it made much more than he had expected. He therefore divided it in half, and a portion made an excellent meal for Ned and his aunt, the remainder being carefully put by for the following day.

An hour or two after eating the meal Frau Plomaert felt so much stronger that she was able to obey the order to go up to the cathedral. Ned went with the able-bodied men to the cloisters. The Spaniards soon came among them, and dragged off numbers of those whom they thought most likely to have taken a prominent part in the fighting, to execution. As they did not wish others from whom money could be wrung to escape from their hands, they presently issued some food to the remainder. The women, after remaining for some hours in the cathedral, were suffered to depart to their homes, for their starving condition excited the compassion even of the Spaniards; and the atrocities which had taken place at the sacks of Mechlin, Zutphen, and Naarden were not repeated in Haarlem.

The next day the men were also released; not from any ideas of mercy, but in order that when they returned to their homes the work of picking out the better class for execution could be the more easily carried on. For

three days longer the girls remained in their hiding, and were then allowed to come out, as Ned felt now that the danger of a general massacre was averted.

"Now, Ned," his aunt said, "you must stay here no longer. Every day we hear proclamations read in the streets that all sheltering refugees and others not belonging to the town will be punished with death; and, as you know, every stranger caught has been murdered."

This they had heard from some of the neighbours. Ned himself had not stirred out since he returned from the cloisters; for his aunt had implored him not to do so, as it would only be running useless risk.

"I hear," she went on, "that they have searched many houses for fugitives, and it is probable the hunt may become even more strict; therefore I think, Ned, that for our sake as well as your own you had better try to escape."

"I quite agree with you, aunt. It will be dark in a couple of hours, and as soon as it is so I will be off."

"It is best that it should be so, Ned; but we shall all miss you sorely. It may be that I shall follow your advice and come over to England on a long visit. I shall talk the matter over with my father. Of course everything depends upon what is going to happen in Holland."

Ned did not tell his aunt that her father had been one of the first dragged out from the cloisters for execution, and that her sister, who kept house for him, had died three days previously to the surrender. His going away was grief enough for her for one day, and he turned the conversation to other matters until night fell, when, after a sad parting, he made his way to the walls, having wound round his waist the rope by which he had been accustomed to lower himself.

The executions continued in Haarlem for two days after he had left, and then the five executioners were so weary of slaying that the three hundred prisoners who still remained for execution were tied back to back and thrown into the lake.

CHAPTER XV

NED RECEIVES PROMOTION

IT was fortunate for Ned that the watch round the city had relaxed greatly when he started from it. The soldiers were discontented at the arrangement that had been made for the city to pay an immense sum of money to escape a general sack. They were all many months in arrear of their pay. They had suffered during the siege, and they now considered themselves to be cheated of their fair reward. The sum paid by the city would go into the hands of the duke; and although the soldiers were promised a share of the prize-money, the duke's necessities were so great that it was probable little of the money would find its way into the hands of the troops. No sooner, therefore, had Haarlem surrendered than a mutinous spirit began to show itself among the troops; they became slack in obeying the orders of their officers, refused to perform their duties, and either gathered in bodies to discuss their wrongs or sulked in their tents. Thus the work of keeping a vigilant watch round the walls by night, to prevent the escape of the victims selected to satiate the vengeance of Don Frederick, was greatly relaxed.

After lowering himself from the walls Ned made his way through the Spanish camp without difficulty. All night he pushed forward without stopping, and as soon as the gates of Leyden were opened he entered. Upon inquiring he found that the prince was at Delft, and hiring a horse he at once rode there. The prince received him with real pleasure.

The long defence of Haarlem, the enormous expenditure which it had cost, both in money and life, for no less than 10,000 soldiers had fallen in the assault or by disease, induced Alva to make another attempt to win back the people of Holland. This failed, and for a month Alva was occupied in persuading the troops to return to their duty. At last he managed to raise a sufficient sum of money to pay each man a portion of the arrears due to him, and a few crowns on account of his share of the ransom paid by Haarlem. During this breathing-time the Prince of Orange was indefatigable in his endeavours to raise a force capable of undertaking the relief of such towns as the Spaniards might invest. Ned was frequently despatched by the prince with letters to magistrates of the chief towns, to nobles and men of influence, and always performed his duties greatly to the prince's satisfaction.

As soon as the Duke of Alva had satisfied the troops, preparations began for a renewal of hostilities, and the prince soon learnt that it was intended that Don Frederick should invade Northern Holland with 16,000 men, and that the rest of the army, which had lately received further reinforcements, should lay siege to Leyden. The prince felt confident that Leyden could resist for a time, but he was very anxious as to the position of things in North Holland. In the courage and ability of Sonoy, the Lieutenant-governor of North Holland, the prince had entire confidence; but it was evident by the tone of his letters that he had lost all hope of being able to defend the province, and altogether despaired of the success of their cause. That Sonoy would do his best the prince was sure; but he knew how difficult it is for one who himself regards resistance as hopeless to inspire enthusiasm in others, and he determined to send a message to cheer the people of North Holland,

and urge them to resist to the last, and to intrust it to one who could speak personally as to the efforts that were being made for their assistance, and who was animated by a real enthusiasm in the cause.

It was an important mission; but after considering the various persons of his household, he decided to intrust it to the lad who had showed such courage and discretion in his dangerous mission to Brussels. The prince accordingly sent for the lad.

"I have another mission for you, Master Martin; and again a dangerous one. The Spaniards are on the point of marching to lay siege to Alkmaar, and I wish a message carried to the citizens, assuring them that they may rely absolutely upon my relieving them by breaking down the dykes. I wish you on this occasion to be more than a messenger. In these despatches I have spoken of you as Captain Martin, as an officer attached to my household you can bear that rank as well as another. Your mission is to encourage the inhabitants to resist to the last, to rouse them to enthusiasm if you can, to give them my solemn promise that they shall not be deserted, and to assure them that if I cannot raise a force sufficient to relieve them I will myself come round and superintend the operation of cutting the dykes and laying the whole country under water. I do not know whether you will find the lieutenant-governor in the city, but at any rate he will not remain there during the siege, as he has work outside. But I shall give you a letter recommending you to him, and ask him to give you his warmest support."

The prince then took off the gold chain he wore round his neck, and placed it upon Ned. "I give you this in the first place, Captain Martin, in token of my esteem and of my gratitude for the perilous service you have already rendered; and secondly, as a visible mark of my confidence in you, and as a sign that I have intrusted you with

authority to speak for me. Going as you now do, it will be best for you to assume somewhat more courtly garments in order to do credit to your mission. I have given orders that these shall be prepared for you, and that you shall be provided with a suit of armour, such as a young noble would wear. All will be prepared for you this afternoon. At six o'clock a ship will be in readiness to sail, and this will land you on the coast at the nearest point to Alkmaar."

In the afternoon a clothier arrived with several suits of handsome material and make, but of sober colours, such as a young man of good family would wear, and an armourer brought him a morion and breast and back pieces of steel, handsomely inlaid with gold. At five o'clock Ned paid another visit to the prince, and thanked him heartily for his kindness towards him, and then received a few last instructions. On his return to his room he found a corporal and four soldiers at the door. The former saluted.

"We have orders, Captain Martin, to place ourselves under your command for detached duty. Our kits are already on board the ship; the men will carry down your mails if they are packed."

"I only take that trunk with me," Ned said, pointing to the one that contained his new clothes; "and there is besides my armour, and that brace of pistols."

Followed by the corporal and men, Ned now made his way down to the port, where the captain of the little vessel received him with profound respect. As soon as they were on board the sails were hoisted, and the vessel ran down the channel from Delft through the Hague to the sea. On the following morning they anchored soon after daybreak. A boat was lowered, and Ned and the soldiers landed on the sandy shore. Followed by them he made his way over the high range of sand-hills facing

the sea, and then across the low cultivated country extending to Alkmaar. He saw parties of men and women hurrying northward along the causeways laden with goods, and leading in most instances horses or donkeys, staggering under the weights placed upon them.

"I think we are but just in time, corporal. The population of the villages are evidently fleeing before the advance of the Spaniards. Another day and we should have been too late to get into the town."

Alkmaar had been in sight from the time they had crossed the dunes, and after walking five miles they arrived at its gates.

"Is the lieutenant-governor in the town?" Ned asked one of the citizens.

"Yes, he is still here," the man said. "You will find him at the town hall."

There was much excitement in the streets. Armed burghers were standing in groups, women were looking anxiously from doors and casements; but Ned was surprised to see no soldiers about, although he knew that the eight hundred whom the prince had despatched as a garrison must have arrived there some days before. On arriving at the town hall he found the general seated at table. In front of him were a group of elderly men whom he supposed to be the leading citizens, and it was evident by the raised voices and angry looks, both of the old officer and of the citizens, that there was some serious differences of opinion between them.

"Whom have we here?" Sonoy asked as Ned approached the table.

"I am a messenger, sir, from the prince. I bear these despatches to yourself, and have also letters and messages from him to the citizens of Alkmaar."

"You come at a good season," the governor said shortly, taking the despatches, "and if anything you can say will

soften the obstinacy of these good people here, you will do them and me a service."

There was silence for a few minutes as the governor read the letters Ned had brought him.

"My good friends," he said at last to the citizens, "this is Captain Martin, an officer whom the prince tells me stands high in his confidence. He has sent him here in the first place to assure you fully of the prince's intentions on your behalf. He will especially represent the prince during the siege, and from his knowledge of the methods of defence at Haarlem, of the arrangements for portioning out the food and other matters, he will be able to give you valuable advice and assistance. As you are aware, I ride in an hour to Enkhuizen in order to superintend the general arrangement for the defence of the province, and especially for affording you aid, and I am glad to leave behind me an officer who is so completely in the confidence of the prince. He will first deliver the messages with which he is charged to you, and then we will hear what he says as to this matter which is in dispute between us."

The passage of Ned with his escort through the street had attracted much attention, and the citizens had followed him into the hall in considerable numbers. Ned took his place by the side of the old officer, and facing the crowd began to speak.

"Citizens of Alkmaar," he began, "the prince has sent me specially to tell you what there is in his mind concerning you, and how his thoughts, night and day, have been turned towards your city. Not only the prince, but all Holland are turning their eyes toward you, and none doubt that you will show yourselves as worthy, as faithful, and as steadfast as have the citizens of Haarlem. The prince bids me tell you that he is doing all he can to collect an army and a fleet.

"In the latter respect he is succeeding well. The hardiest seamen of Holland and Zeeland are gathering round him, and have sworn that they will clear the Zuider-Zee of the Spaniards or die in the attempt. As to the army, it is, as you know, next to impossible to gather one capable of coping with the host of Spain in the field; but happily you need not rely solely upon an army to save you in your need. Here you have an advantage over your brethren of Haarlem. There is was impossible to flood the land round the city; and the dykes by which the food supply of the Spaniards could have been cut off were too strongly guarded to be won.

"But it is not so here. The dykes are far away, and the Spaniards cannot protect them. Grievous as it is to the prince to contemplate the destruction of the rich country your fathers have won from the sea, he bids me tell you that he will not hesitate; but that, as a last resource, he pledges himself that he will lay the country under water and drown out the Spaniards to save you. They have sworn, as you know, to turn Holland into a desert—to leave none alive in her cities and villages. Well, then; better a thousand times that we should return it to the ocean from which we won it, and that then, having cast out the Spaniards, we should renew the labours of our fathers, and again recover it from the sea."

A shout of agreement and a round of applause rang through the hall.

"But this," Ned went on, "is the last resource, and will not be taken until nought else can be done to save you. It is for you, first, to show the Spaniards how the men of Holland can fight for their freedom, their religion, their families, and their homes. Then, when you have done all that men can do, the prince will prove to the Spaniards that the men of Holland will lay their country under water rather than surrender."

"Does the prince solemnly bind himself to do this?" one of the elder burghers asked.

"He does; and here is his promise in black and white, with his seal attached."

"We will retire, and let you have our answer in half an hour."

Ned glanced at the governor, who shook his head slightly.

"What! is there need of deliberation?" Ned asked in a voice that was heard all over the hall. "To you, citizens at large, I appeal. Of what use is it now to deliberate? Have you not already sent a defiant answer to Alva? Are not his troops within a day's march of you? Think you that, even if you turn traitors to your country and to your prince, and throw open the gates, it would save you now? I appeal to you, is this a time to hesitate or discuss? I ask you now, in the name of the prince, are you true men or false? Are you for Orange or Alva? What is your answer?"

A tremendous shout shook the hall.

"We will fight to the death! No surrender! Down with the council!" and there were loud and threatening shouts against some of the magistrates. The governor now rose:

"My friends," he said, "I rejoice to hear your decision; and now there is no time for idle talk. Throw open the gates, and call in the troops whom the prince has sent to your aid, and whom your magistrates have hitherto refused to admit. Choose from among yourselves six men upon whom you can rely to confer with me and with the officer commanding the troops. You need now men of heart and action at your head. Captain Martin will deliberate with twelve citizens whom I will select as to the steps to be taken for gathering the food into magazines for the public use, for issuing daily rations, for

organising the women as well as the men for such work as they are fit. There is much to be done, and but little time to do it, for tomorrow the Spaniard will be in front of your walls."

In an hour's time the 800 troops marched in from Egmont Castle and Egmont Abbey, where they had been quartered while the citizens were wavering between resistance and submission. Four of the citizens, who had already been told off for the purpose, met them at the gate and allotted them quarters in the various houses. Governor Sonoy was already in deliberation with the six men chosen by the townspeople to represent them. He had at once removed from the magistracy an equal number of those who had been the chief opponents of resistance; for here, as in other towns, the magistrates had been appointed by the Spaniards.

Ned was busy conferring with the committee, and explaining to them the organisation adopted at Haarlem. Having set these matters in train, Ned rejoined the governor.

"I congratulate you, Captain Martin, upon the service you have rendered today. I leave the city tonight, and shall write to the prince from Enkhuizen telling him how you have brought the citizens round to a sense of their duty, and that I am now convinced the city will resist till the last. In military matters the officer in command of the troops will of course take the direction of things; but in all other matters you, as the prince's special representative, will act as adviser of the burghers. I wish that I could stay here and share in the perils of the siege. It would be far more suitable to my disposition than arguing with pig-headed burghers, and trying to excite their enthusiasm when my own hopes have all but vanished."

That night was a busy one in Alkmaar. Few thought of

sleeping, and before morning the lists were all prepared, the companies mustered, the officers chosen, posts on the walls assigned to them, and every man, woman, and child in Alkmaar knew the nature of the duties they would be called upon to perform. Just before midnight the governor left.

Early in the morning masses of smoke were seen rising from the village of Egmont, telling the citizens of Alkmaar that the troopers of Don Frederick had arrived. Alkmaar was but a small town, and when every man capable of bearing arms was mustered they numbered only about 1,300, besides the 800 soldiers. It was on the 21st August that Don Frederick with 16,000 veteran troops appeared before the walls of the town, and at once proceeded to invest it.

CHAPTER XVI

FRIENDS IN TROUBLE

WITHIN the little town of Alkmaar all went on quietly. While the Spaniards constructed their lines of investment and mounted their batteries, the men laboured continually at strengthening their walls, the women and children carried materials, all the food was collected in magazines, and rations served out regularly. A carpenter named Peter Van der Mey managed to make his way out of the city a fortnight after the investment began with letters to the Prince and Sonoy, giving the formal consent of all within the walls for the cutting of the dykes when it should be necessary.

At daybreak on the 18th of September a heavy cannonade was opened against the walls, and after twelve hours' fire two breaches were made. Upon the following morning two of the best Spanish regiments which had just arrived from Italy led the way to the assault. They were followed by heavy masses of troops.

Now Ned was again to see what the Dutch burghers could do when fairly roused to action. Every man capable of bearing a weapon was upon the walls, and not even in Haarlem was an attack received with more coolness and confidence. As the storming parties approached they were swept by artillery and musketry, and as they attempted to climb the breaches, boiling water, pitch and oil, molten lead and unslaked lime were poured upon them. Hundreds of tarred and blazing hoops were skilfully thrown on to their necks, and those who in spite of these terrible missiles mounted the breach, found

themselves confronted by the soldiers and burghers, armed with axe and pike, and were slain or cast back again.

Three times was the assault renewed, fresh troops being ever brought up and pressing forward, wild with rage at their repulses by so small a number of defenders. But each was in turn hurled back. For four hours the desperate fight continued. The women and children showed a calmness equal to that of the men, moving backwards and forwards between the magazines and the ramparts with supplies of missiles and ammunition to the combatants. At nightfall the Spaniards desisted from the attack and fell back to their camp, leaving a thousand dead behind them; while only twenty-four of the garrison and thirteen of the burghers lost their lives.

The cannonade was renewed on the following morning, and after 700 shots had been fired and the breaches enlarged, a fresh assault was ordered. But the troops absolutely refused to advance. It seemed to them that the devil, whom they believed the Protestants worshipped, had protected the city, otherwise how could a handful of townsmen and fishermen have defeated the invincible soldiers of Spain, outnumbering them eight-fold?

In vain Don Frederick and his generals entreated and stormed. Several of the soldiers were run through the body, but even this did not intimidate the rest into submission, and the assault was in consequence postponed. Already, indeed, there was considerable uneasiness in the Spanish camp. Governor Sonoy had opened many of the dykes, and the ground in the neighbourhood of the camp was already feeling soft and boggy. It needed but that two great dykes should be pierced to spread the inundation over the whole country.

The carpenter who had soon after the commencement of the siege carried out the despatches had again made

his way back. He was the bearer of the copy of a letter sent from the prince to Sonoy, ordering him to protect the dykes and sluices with strong guards, lest the peasants, in order to save their crops, should repair the breaches. He was directed to flood the whole country at all risks rather than to allow Alkmaar to fall. The prince directed the citizens to kindle four great beacon-fires as soon as it should prove necessary to resort to extreme measures, and solemnly promised that as soon as the signal was given an inundation should be created which would sweep the whole Spanish army into the sea.

The carpenter was informed of the exact contents of his despatches, so that in case of losing them in his passage through the Spanish camp he could repeat them by word of mouth to the citizens. This was exactly what happened. The despatches were concealed in a hollow stick, and this stick the carpenter, in carrying out his perilous undertaking, lost. As it turned out it was fortunate that he did so. The stick was picked up in the camp and discovered to be hollow. It was carried to Don Frederick, who read the despatches, and at once called his officers together.

Alarmed at the prospect before them, and already heartily sick of a siege in which the honour all fell to their opponents, they agreed that the safety of an army of the picked troops of Spain must not be sacrificed merely with the hope of obtaining possession of an insignificant town. Orders were therefore given for an immediate retreat, and on the 8th of October the siege was raised and the troops marched back to Amsterdam.

Thus for the first time the Spaniards had to recoil before their puny adversaries. The terrible loss of life entailed by the capture of Haarlem had struck a profound blow at the haughty confidence of the Spaniards,

and had vastly encouraged the people of Holland. The successful defence of Alkmaar did even more.

Ned had taken his full share in the labours and dangers of the siege. He had been indefatigable in seeing that all the arrangements worked well and smoothly, had slept on the walls with the men, encouraged the women, talked and laughed with the children, and done all in his power to keep up the spirits of the inhabitants. At the assault on the breaches he had donned his armour and fought in the front line as a volunteer under the officer in command of the garrison.

On the day when the Spaniards were seen to be breaking up their camps and retiring, a meeting was held in the town-hall, after a solemn thanksgiving had been offered in the church, and by acclamation Ned was made a citizen of the town, and was presented with a gold chain as a token of the gratitude of the people of Alkmaar. There was nothing more for him to do here, and as soon as the Spaniards had broken up their camp, he mounted a horse and rode to Enkhuizen, bidding his escort follow him at once on foot.

He had learned from the carpenter who had made his way in, that the fleet was collected, and that a portion of them from the northern ports under Admiral Dirkzoon had already set sail, and the whole were expected to arrive in a few days in the Zuider-Zee. As he rode through the street on his way to the burgomaster's his eye fell upon a familiar face, and he at once reined in his horse.

"Ah! Peters," he exclaimed, "is it you? Is the *Good Venture* in port?"

Peters looked up in astonishment. The voice was that of Ned Martin, but he scarce recognised in the handsomely dressed young officer the lad he had last seen a year before.

"Why, it is Master Ned, sure enough!" he exclaimed, shaking the lad's hand warmly. "Though if you had not spoken I should have assuredly passed you. Why, lad, you have grown into a man; but though you have added to your height and your breadth your cheeks have fallen in greatly, and your colour has well nigh faded away."

"I have had two long bouts of fasting, Peters, and have but just finished the second. I am Captain Martin now, by the favour of the Prince of Orange. How are they at home? and how goes it with my father?"

"He is on board, Master Ned. This is his first voyage, and right glad we are, as you may guess, to have him back again; and joyful will he be to see you. He had your letter safely that you wrote after the fall of Haarlem, and it would have done you good if you had heard the cheers in the summer-house when he read it out to the captains there. We had scarce thought we should ever hear of you again."

"I will put up my horse at the burgomaster's, Peters, and come on board with you at once. I must speak to him first for a few minutes. A messenger was sent off on horse-back last night the moment the road was opened to say that the Spaniards had raised the siege of Alkmaar; but I must give him a few details."

A quarter of an hour later Ned leapt from the quay on to the deck of the *Good Venture*. His father's delight was great as he entered the cabin, and he was no less astonished than Peters had been at the change that a year had made in his appearance.

"You have been striking a blow for freedom, lad, I mean to do my best to strike one tomorrow or next day," he said after they had talked for half an hour.

"How is that, father?"

"Bossu's fleet of thirty vessels are cruising off the town, and they have already had some skirmishes with

Dirkzoon's vessels; there is sure to be a fight in a few days. There is a vessel in port which will go out crowded with the fishermen here to take part in the fight; and I am going to fly the Dutch flag for once instead of the English, and am going to strike a blow to pay them off for the murder of your mother's relations, to say nothing of this," and he touched his wooden leg.

"Can I go with you, father?" Ned asked eagerly.

"If you like, lad. It will be tough work, you know; for the Spaniards fight well, that cannot be denied. But as you stood against them when they have been five to one in the breaches of Haarlem and Alkmaar, you will find it a novelty to meet them when the odds are not altogether against us."

The next day, the 11th of October, the patriot fleet were seen bearing down with a strong easterly breeze upon the Spaniards, who were cruising between Enkhuizen and Horn. All was ready on board the *Good Venture* and her consort. The bells rang, and a swarm of hardy fishermen came pouring on board. In five minutes the sails were hoisted, and the two vessels, flying the Dutch flag, started amidst the cheers of the burghers on the walls to take their share in the engagement. They came up with the enemy just as Dirkzoon's vessels engaged them, and at once joined in the fray.

The patriot fleet now numbered twenty-five vessels against the thirty Spaniards, most of which were greatly superior in size to their opponents. The Dutch at once manœuvred to come to close quarters, and the Spaniards, who had far less confidence in themselves by sea than on land, very speedily began to draw out of the fight. The *Good Venture* and a Dutch craft had laid themselves alongside a large Spanish ship, and boarded her from both sides. Ned and Peters, followed by the English sailors, clambered on board near the stern, while the

Dutch fishermen, most of whom were armed with heavy axes, boarded at the waist.

The Spaniards fought but feebly, and no sooner did the men from the craft on the other side pour in and board her than they threw down their arms. Four other ships were taken, and the rest of the Spanish vessels spread their sails and made for Amsterdam, hotly pursued by the Dutch fleet. One huge Spanish vessel alone, the *Inquisition*, a name that was in itself an insult to the Dutch, and which was by far the largest and best manned vessel in the two fleets, disdained to fly. She was the admiral's vessel, and Bossu, who was himself a native of the Netherlands, although deserted by his fleet, refused to fly before his puny opponents.

The Spaniards in the ships captured had all been killed or fastened below, and under the charge of small parties of the Dutch sailors the prizes sailed for Enkhuizen. The ship captured by the *Good Venture* had been the last to strike her flag, and when she started under her prize crew there were three smaller Dutch ships besides the *Good Venture* on the scene of the late conflict. With a cheer, answered from boat to boat, the four vessels sailed towards the *Inquisition*. A well directed broadside from the Spaniards cut away the masts out of one them, and left her in a sinking condition. The other three got alongside and grappled with her.

It was a life and death contest. Bossu and his men, clad in coats of mail, stood with sword and shield on the deck of the *Inquisition* to repel all attempts to board. The Dutch attacked with their favourite missiles—pitch hoops, boiling oil, and molten lead. Again and again they clambered up the lofty sides of the *Inquisition* and gained a momentary footing on her deck, only to be hurled down again into their ships below. The fight began at three o'clock in the afternoon and lasted till

darkness. But even this did not terminate it; and all night Spaniards and Dutchmen grappled in deadly conflict. All this time the vessels were drifting as the winds and tides took them, and at last grounded on a shoal called The Neck, near Wydeness. As soon as it was light the country people came off in boats and joined in the fight, relieving their compatriots by carrying their killed and wounded on shore. They brought fresh ammunition as well as men, and at eleven o'clock Admiral Bossu struck his flag and surrendered with 300 prisoners.

As soon as the fight was over the *Gooa Venture* sailed back to Enkhuizen. Five of her own crew and thirty-eight of the volunteers on board her had been killed, and there was scarcely a man who was not more or less severely wounded.

Ned sailed round in the *Good Venture* to Delft and again joined the Prince of Orange there. On learning the share that the *Good Venture* had taken in the sea-fight, the prince went on board and warmly thanked Captain Martin and the crew. Half an hour after the prince returned to the palace he sent for Ned.

"Did you not say," he asked, "that the lady who concealed you at Brussels was the Countess Von Harp?"

"Yes, your highness. You have no bad news of her, I hope?"

"I am sorry to say that I have," the prince replied. "I have just received a letter brought me by a messenger from a friend at Maastricht. He tells me among other matters that the countess and her daughter were arrested there two days since. They were passing through in disguise, and were, it was supposed, making for Germany, when it chanced that the countess was recognised by a man in the service of one of the magistrates."

Ned was greatly grieved when he heard of the danger to which the lady who had behaved so kindly to him was

exposed, and an hour later he again went into the prince's study.

"I have come in to ask, sir, if you will allow me to be absent for a time. I want to try to get the Countess Von Harp out of the hands of those who have captured her."

"But how are you going to do that?" the prince asked in surprise. "It is one thing to slip out of the hands of Alva's minions as you did at Brussels, but another thing altogether to get two women out of prison."

"That is so," Ned said; "but I rely much, sir, upon the document which I took a year since from the body of Von Aert's clerk, and which I have carefully preserved ever since. It bears the seal of the Blood Council, and is an order to all magistrates to assist the bearer in all ways that he may require."

"It is a bold enterprise," the prince said, "and may cost you your life. Still I do not say that it is impossible."

"I have also," Ned said, "some orders for the arrest of prisoners. These are not sealed, but bear the signature of the president of the council. I shall go to a scrivener and shall get him to copy one of them exactly, making only the alteration that the persons of the Countess Von Harp, her daughter, and servant are to be handed over to my charge for conveyance to Brussels."

The prince smiled. "Sometimes you seem to me a man, Martin, and then again you enter upon an undertaking with the light-heartedness of a boy. Go, my lad; and may God aid you in your scheme. You will require two or three trusty men with you to act as officials under your charge. I will give you a letter to my correspondent in Maastricht begging him to provide some men on whom he can rely for this work."

The next morning Ned, provided with the forged order of release, started on his journey. He was disguised as a peasant, and carried a suit of clothes similar in cut

and fashion to those worn by Genet. He went first to Rotterdam, and bearing west crossed the river Lek, and then struck the Waal at Gorichen, and there hired a boat and proceeded up the river to Nymegen. He then walked across to Grave, and again taking boat proceeded up the Maas, past Venlo and Roermond to Maastricht. He landed a few miles above the town, and changed his peasant clothes for the suit he carried with him.

At a farmhouse he succeeded in buying a horse, saddle, and bridle. Maastricht was a strongly fortified city, and on entering its gates Ned was requested to show his papers. He at once produced the document bearing the seal of the Council. This was amply sufficient, and he soon took up his quarters at an inn. His first step was to find the person for whom he bore the letter from the prince. The gentleman, who was a wealthy merchant, after reading the missive and learning from Ned the manner in which he could assist him, at once promised to do so.

"You require three men, you say, dressed as officials in the employment of the Council. The dress is easy enough, for they bear no special badge or cognisance, although generally they are attired in dark green doublets and trunks and red hose. There will be no difficulty as to the men themselves; I have three at least upon whom I can absolutely rely. Their duty, you say, will be simply to accompany you to the prison and to ride with you with these ladies until beyond the gates. They must, of course, be mounted, and must each have pillions for the carriage of the prisoners behind them. Once well away from the town they will scatter, leave their horses at places I shall appoint, change their clothes, and return into the city. What do you mean to do with the ladies when you have got them free?"

"I do not know what their plans will be, or where they

will wish to go," Ned said. "I should propose to have a vehicle with a pair of horses awaiting them two miles outside the town. I should say that a country cart would be the least likely to excite suspicion. I would have three peasant's dresses there with it. I do not know that I can make further provision for their flight, as I cannot say whether they will make for the coast, or try to continue their journey across the frontier."

"You can leave these matters to me," the merchant said; "the cart and disguises shall be at the appointed spot whenever you let me know the hour at which you will be there. You must give me until noon tomorrow to make all the arrangements."

"Very well, sir" Ned said. "I will present myself to the magistrates tomorrow at noon, and obtain from them the order upon the governor of the prison to hand the ladies over to me. If I should succeed I will go straight back to my inn. If you will place someone near the door there to see if I enter, which if I succeed will be about one o'clock, he can bring you the news. I will have my horse brought round at two, and at that hour your men can ride up and join me, and I will proceed with them straight to the prison."

CHAPTER XVII

A RESCUE

AT twelve o'clock on the following day Ned went to the town-hall, and on stating that he was the bearer of an order from the Council, was at once shown into the chamber in which three of the magistrates were sitting.

"I am the bearer of an order from the Council for the delivery to me of the persons of the Countess Von Harp, her daughter, and the women arrested in company with them for conveyance to Brussels, there to answer the charges against them. This is the order of the Council with their seal, ordering all magistrates to render assistance to me as one of their servants. This is the special order for the handing over to me of the prisoners named."

The magistrates took the first order, glanced at it and at the seal, and perfectly satisfied with this gave but a casual glance at that for the transferring of the prisoners.

"I suppose you have some men with you to escort the prisoners?" one of the magistrates asked.

"Assuredly," Ned replied. "I have with me three men, behind whom the women will ride."

The magistrates countersigned the order upon the governor of the prison to hand over the three prisoners, and gave it with the letter of the Council to Ned. He bowed and retired.

Ned walked back to his inn, ordered his horse to be saddled at two o'clock, and partook of a hearty meal. Then paying his reckoning he went out and mounted his horse. As he did so three men in green doublets and

red hose rode up and took their places behind him. On arriving at the prison he dismounted, and handing his horse to one of his followers entered.

"I have an order from the Council, countersigned by the magistrates here, for the delivery to me of three prisoners."

The warder showed him into a room.

"The governor is ill," he said, "and confined to his bed; but I will take the order to him."

In ten minutes the warder returned.

"The prisoners are without," he said, "and ready to depart."

Pulling his bonnet well down over his eyes, Ned went out into the courtyard.

"You are to accompany me to Brussels, countess," he said gruffly. "Horses are waiting for you without."

The countess did not even glance at the official who had thus come to convey her to what was in all probability death, but followed through the gate into the street. The men backed their horses up to the block of stone used for mounting. Ned assisted the females to the pillions, and when they were seated mounted his own horse and led the way down the street. Many of the people as they passed along groaned or hooted, for the feeling in Maastricht was strongly in favour of the patriot side, a feeling for which they were some years later to be punished by the almost total destruction of the city, and the slaughter of the greater portion of its inhabitants.

Ned paid no attention to these demonstrations, but quickening his horse into a trot rode along the street and out of the gate of the city. As the road was a frequented one, he maintained his place at the head of the party until they had left the city nearly two miles behind them. On arriving at a small cross road one of the men said: "This is the way, sir; it is up this road that the cart is in

waiting." Ned now reined back his horse to the side of that on which the countess was riding.

"Countess," he said, "have you forgotten the English lad you aided a year ago in Brussels?"

The countess started.

"I recognise you now, sir," she said coldly; "and little did I think at that time that I should next see you as an officer of the Council of Blood."

Ned smiled.

"Your mistake is a natural one, countess; but in point of fact I am still in the service of the Prince of Orange, and have only assumed this garb as a means of getting you and your daughter out of the hands of those murderers."

The surprise of the countess for a moment kept her silent; but Gertrude, who had overhead what was said, burst into exclamations of delight.

"Pardon me for having doubted you," the countess exclaimed much affected.

"No pardon is required, countess. Seeing that the prison authorities handed you over to me, you could not but have supposed that I was as I seemed, in the service of the Council."

Just at this moment they came upon a cart drawn up by the roadside. Ned assisted the countess and her daughter to alight, and mother and daughter threw themselves into each other's arms, and wept with delight at this unexpected delivery that had befallen them. It was some time before they were sufficiently recovered to speak.

"But how do you come here?" the countess asked Ned, "and how have you effected this miracle?"

Ned briefly related how he had heard of their captivity, and the manner in which he had been enabled to effect their escape.

"And now, countess," he said, "the day is wearing on, and it is necessary that you should at once decide upon your plans. Will you again try to make the German frontier or to the sea-coast, or remain in hiding here?"

"We cannot make for Germany without again crossing the Maas," the countess said, "and it is a long way to the sea-coast. What say you, Magdalene?"

"I think," the old woman said, "that you had best carry out the advice I gave before. It is little more than twelve miles from here to the village where, as I told you, I have relations living. We can hire a house there, and there is no chance of your being recognised. I can send a boy thence to Brussels to fetch the jewels and money you left in charge of your friend the Count Von Dort there."

"That will certainly be the best way, Magdalene. It will hardly be necessary, will it," she asked Ned, "to put on the disguises, for nothing in the world can be simpler than our dresses at present?"

"You had certainly best put the peasant cloaks and caps on. Inquiries are sure to be made all through the country when they find at Maastricht how they have been tricked."

The three men who had aided in the scheme had ridden off as soon as the cart was reached, and Ned, being anxious that the party should be upon their way, hurried them into the cart. It was not necessary for them to change their garments, as the peasant's cloaks completely enveloped them, and the high head-dresses quite changed their appearance.

"Do not forget, countess, I hope some day to see you in England," Ned said as they took their seats.

"I will not forget," the countess said; "and only wish that at present I was on my way thither."

After a warm farewell, and seeing the cart fairly on its way, Ned mounted his horse and rode north-west. He

slept that night at Heerenthals, and on the following night at Bois-le-Duc. Here he sold his horse for a few crowns, and taking boat proceeded down the Dommel into the Maas, and then on to Rotterdam. On his arrival at Delft he was heartily welcomed by the prince; who was greatly pleased to hear that he had, without any accident or hitch, carried out successfully the plan he had proposed to himself.

Alva's reign of terror and cruelty was now drawing to an end. His successor was on his way out, and the last days of his administration were embittered by the retreat of his army from before Alkmaar and the naval defeat from the Zuider-Zee.

On the 17th of November Don Louis de Requesens, Grand Commander of St. Jago, Alva's successor, arrived in Brussels; and on the 18th of December the Duke of Alva left. He is said to have boasted, on his way home, that he had caused 18,000 inhabitants of the provinces to be executed during the period of his government. After the departure of their tyrant the people of the Netherlands breathed more freely, for they hoped that, under their new governor, there would be a remission in the terrible agony they had suffered; and for a time his proclamations were of a conciliatory nature. But it was soon seen that there was no change in policy. Peace was to be given only on the condition of all Protestants recanting or leaving their country.

The first military effort of the new governor was to endeavour to relieve the city of Middleburg, the capital of the Island of Walcheren, which had long been besieged by the Protestants. Mondragon the governor was sorely pressed by famine, and could hold out but little longer, unless rescue came. The importance of the city was felt by both parties. Requesens himself went to Bergen-op-Zoom, where seventy-five ships were collected

under the command, nominally, of Admiral de Glimes, but really under that of Julian Romero, while another fleet of thirty ships was assembled at Antwerp, under D'Avila, and moved down towards Flushing, there to await the arrival of that of Romero. Upon the other hand, the Prince of Orange collected a powerful fleet under the command of Admiral Boisot, and himself paid a visit to the ships, and assembling the officers roused them to enthusiasm by a stirring address.

On the 20th of January the *Good Venture* again entered the port of Delft; and hearing that a battle was expected in a few days, Captain Martin determined to take part in it. Ned informed the Prince of Orange of his father's intention, and asked leave to accompany him.

"Assuredly you may go if you please," the prince said; "but I fear that, sooner or later, the fortune of war will deprive me of you, and I should miss you much."

The *Good Venture*, flying the Dutch flag, joined Boisot's fleet at Romerswael, a few miles below Bergen, on the 27th January. Two days later the fleet of Romero were seen coming down the river in three divisions. When the first of the Spanish ships came near they delivered a broadside, which did considerable execution among the Dutch fleet. There was no time for further cannonading. A few minutes later the fleets met in the narrow channel, and the ships grappling with each other, a hand to hand struggle began.

The fighting was of the most desperate character; no quarter was asked or given on either side, and men fought with fury hand to hand upon decks slippery with blood. But the combat did not last long. The Spaniards had little confidence in themselves on board ship. Their discipline was now of little advantage to them, and the savage fury with which the Zeelanders fought shook their courage. Fifteen ships were speedily captured and 1,200

Spaniards slain, and the remainder of the fleet, which, on account of the narrowness of the passage had not been able to come into action, retreated to Bergen.

Romero himself, whose ship had grounded, sprang out of a port-hole and swam ashore, and landed at the very feet of the Grand Commander, who had been standing all day upon the dyke in the midst of a pouring rain, only to be a witness of the total defeat of his fleet. Mondragon now capitulated, receiving honourable conditions.

With the fall of Middleburg the Dutch and Zeelanders remained masters of the entire line of sea-coast, but upon land the situation was still perilous. Leyden was closely invested, and all communication by land between the various cities suspended.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SIEGE OF LEYDEN

THE Spaniards had no sooner appeared before Leyden than they set to work to surround it with a cordon of redoubts. No less than sixty-two were erected and garrisoned, and the town was therefore cut off from all communication from without. Its defenders were few in number, there being no troops in the town save a small corps composed of exiles from other cities, and five companies of burgher guard. The walls, however, were strong, and it was famine rather than the foe that the citizens feared. They trusted to the courage of the burghers to hold the walls, and to the energy of the Prince of Orange to relieve them.

At the commencement of the siege the citizens gathered all their food into the magazines, and at the end of June the daily allowance to each full-grown man was half a pound of meat and half a pound of bread, women and children receiving less.

The prince had his headquarters at Delft and Rotterdam, and an important fortress called the Polderwaert between these two cities secured him the control of the district watered by the rivers Yssel and Maas. On the 29th of June the Spaniards attacked this fort, but were beaten off with a loss of 700 men. The prince was now occupied in endeavouring to persuade the Dutch authorities to permit the great sluices at Rotterdam, Schiedam, and Delft-Haven to be opened. The damage to the country would be enormous; but there was no

other course to rescue Leyden, and with it the whole of Holland, from destruction.

It was not until the middle of July that his eloquent appeals and arguments prevailed, and the estates consented to his plan. Subscriptions were opened in all the Dutch towns for maintaining the inhabitants of the district that was to be submerged until it could be again restored, and a large sum was raised. On the 3rd of August all was ready, and the prince himself superintended the breaking down of the dykes in sixteen places, while at the same time the sluices at Schiedam and Rotterdam were opened and the water began to pour over the land.

While waiting for the water to rise, stores of provisions were collected in all the principal towns, and 200 vessels of small draught of water gathered in readiness. Unfortunately no sooner had the work been done than the prince was attacked by a violent fever, brought on by anxiety and exertion.

On the 21st of August a letter was received from the town saying that they had held out two months with food and another month without food. Their bread had long been gone, and their last food, some malt cake, would last but four days. After that was gone there was nothing left but starvation.

Upon the same day they received a letter from the prince, assuring them that the dykes were all pierced and the water rising upon the great dyke that separated the city from the sea. The letter was read publicly in the market-place, and excited the liveliest joy among the inhabitants. The hopes of the besieged fell again, however, as day after day passed without change; and it was not until the 1st of September, when the prince began to recover from his fever, and was personally able to superintend the operations, that these began in earnest. The

distance from Leyden to the outer dyke was fifteen miles; ten of these were already flooded, and the flotilla, which consisted of more than 200 vessels, manned in all with 2,500 veterans, including 800 of the wild sea beggars of Zeeland, started on their way, and reached without difficulty the great dyke called the Land-scheiding. Between this town and Leyden were several other dykes, all of which would have to be taken.

Ned had been in close attendance upon the prince during his illness, and when the fleet was ready to start requested that he might be allowed to accompany it. This the prince at once granted, and introduced him to Admiral Boisot.

"I shall be glad if you will take Captain Martin in your own ship," he said. "Young as he is he has seen much service, and is full of resource and invention. You will, I am sure, find him of use; and he can act as messenger to convey your orders from ship to ship."

The prince had given orders that the Land-scheiding, whose top was still a foot and a half above water, should be taken possession of at all hazard, and this was accomplished by surprise on the night of the 10th. The Spaniards stationed there were either killed or driven off, and the Dutch fortified it themselves upon it. The dyke was cut through and the fleet sailed through the gap.

The admiral had believed that the Land-scheiding once cut, the water would flood the country as far as Leyden, but another dyke, the Greenway, rose a foot above water three-quarters of a mile inside the Land-scheiding. As soon as the water had risen over the land sufficiently to float the ships, the fleet advanced, seized the Greenway, and cut it. But as the water extended in all directions it grew shallower, and the admiral found that the only way by which he could advance was by a

deep canal leading to a large mere called the Fresh Water Lake.

This canal was crossed by a bridge, and its sides were occupied by 3,000 Spanish soldiers. Boisot endeavoured to force the way but found it impossible to do so, and was obliged to withdraw. He was now almost despairing. He had accomplished but two miles, the water was sinking rather than rising owing to a long-continued east wind, and many of his ships were already aground. On the 18th, however, the wind shifted to the north-west, and for three days blew a gale. The water rose rapidly, and at the end of the second day the ships were all afloat again.

Hearing from a peasant of a comparatively low dyke between two villages Boisot at once sailed in that direction. There was a strong Spanish force stationed here; but these were seized with a panic and fled, their courage unhinged by the constantly rising waters, the appearance of the numerous fleet, and their knowledge of the reckless daring of the wild sailors. The dyke was cut, the two villages with their fortifications burned, and the fleet moved on to North Aa. The enemy abandoned this position also and fled to Zoetermeer, a strongly fortified village a mile and a quarter from the city walls. Gradually the Spanish army had been concentrated round the city as the water drove them back, and they were principally stationed at this village and the two strong forts of Lammien and Leyderdorp, each within a few hundred yards of the town.

The fleet was delayed at North Aa by another dyke, called the Kirkway. The waters, too, spreading again over a wider space, and diminished from the east wind again setting in, sank rapidly, and very soon the whole fleet was aground; for there were but nine inches of water, and they required twenty to float them. Day after day they lay motionless. The Prince of Orange, who had

again been laid up with the fever, rose from his sick-bed and visited the fleet. He encouraged the dispirited sailors, rebuked their impatience, and after reconnoitring the ground issued orders for the immediate destruction of the Kirkway, and then returned to Delft.

All this time Leyden was suffering horribly. The burghers were aware that the fleet had set forth to their relief, but they knew better than those on board the obstacles that opposed its progress. They were literally starving, and their misery far exceeded even that of the citizens of Haarlem.

Still the east wind continued, until stout Admiral Boisot himself almost despaired. But on the night of the 1st of October a violent gale burst from the north-west, and then shifting, blew more strongly from the south-west. The water was piled up high upon the southern coast of Holland, and sweeping furiously inland poured through the ruined dykes, and in twenty-four hours the fleet was afloat again. At midnight they advanced in the midst of the storm and darkness. Some Spanish vessels that had been brought up to aid the defenders were swept aside and sunk.

The fleet, sweeping on past half-submerged stacks and farmhouses, made its way to the fresh water mere. Some shallows checked it for a time, but the crews sprang overboard into the water, and by main strength hoisted their vessels across them. Two obstacles alone stood between them and the city—the forts of Zoeterwoude and Lammen, the one five hundred, the other but two hundred and fifty yards from the city. Both were strong and well supplied with troops and artillery, but the panic which had seized the Spaniards extended to Zoeterwoude. Hardly was the fleet in sight in the grey light of the morning when the Spaniards poured out from the

fortress, and spread along a road on the dyke leading in a westerly direction towards the Hague.

The waves, driven by the wind, were beating on the dyke, and it was crumbling rapidly away, and hundreds sank beneath the flood. The Zeelanders drove their vessels up alongside, and pierced them with their harpoons, or, plunging into the waves, attacked them with sword and dagger. The numbers killed amounted to not less than a thousand; the rest effected their escape to the Hague. Zoeterwoude was captured and set on fire, but Lammen still barred their path. Bristling with guns, it seemed to defy them either to capture or pass it on their way to the city.

Leyderdorp, where Valdez with his main force lay, was a mile and a half distant on the right, and within a mile of the city, and the guns of the two forts seemed to render it next to impossible for the fleet to pass on. Boisot, after reconnoitring the position, wrote despondently to the prince that he intended if possible on the following morning to carry the fort, but if unable to do so, he said, there would be nothing for it but to wait for another gale of wind to still further raise the water, and enable him to make a wide circuit and enter Leyden on the opposite side.

In the morning the fleet prepared for the assault. All was still and quiet in the fortress, and the dreadful suspicion that the city had been carried at night, and that their labour was in vain, seized those on board. Suddenly a man was seen wading out from the fort, while at the same time a boy waved his cap wildly from its summit. The mystery was solved. The Spaniards had fled panic-stricken in the darkness. Had they remained they could have frustrated the enterprise, and Leyden must have fallen; but the events of the two preceding days had shaken their courage. They had retreated at the very

moment that the fall of a wall sapped by the flood laid bare a whole side of the city for their entrance. They heard the crash in the darkness, and it but added to their fears, for they thought that the citizens were sallying out to take some measures which would further add to the height of the flood. Their retreat was discovered by the boy, who, having noticed the procession of lights in the darkness, became convinced that the Spaniards had retired, and persuaded the magistrates to allow him to make his way out to the fort to reconnoitre. As soon as the truth was known the fleet advanced, passed the fort, and drew up alongside the quays.

These were lined by the famishing people, every man, woman, and child having strength to stand having come out to greet their deliverers. Bread was thrown from all the vessels among the crowd as they came up, and many died from too eagerly devouring the food after their long fast. Then the admiral stepped ashore, followed by the whole of those on board the ships. The work of distributing food and relieving the sick was then undertaken. The next day the prince repaired to the town.

Ned Martin was not one of those who entered Leyden with Boisot's relieving fleet. When the Prince of Orange paid his visit to the fleet Boisot told him the young officer he had recommended to him was down with a fever, which was, he believed, similar to that from which the prince himself was but just recovering.

The prince at once ordered him to be carried on board his own galley, and took him back with him to Delft. Here he lay for a month completely prostrated. The prince several times visited him personally, and, as soon as he became in some degree convalescent, said to him:

"The surgeon says that you must have rest for a while, and that it will be well for you to get away from our marshes for a time. For two years you have done good

and faithful service, and I think that your native air is the best for you at present. With the letters that came to me from Flushing this morning is one from your good father, asking for news of you. His ship arrived there yesterday, and he has heard from one of those who were with Boisot that you have fallen ill; therefore, if it be to your liking, I will send you in one of my galleys to Flushing."

"I thank your excellency much," Ned said. "Indeed for the last few days I have been thinking much of home and longing to be back."

"You will feel a different man when you have been a few hours at sea," the prince said kindly. "I hope to see you with me again some day. And now farewell. I will order a galley to be got in readiness at once. I leave myself for Leyden in half an hour. Take this, my young friend, in remembrance of the Prince of Orange."

So saying he took off his watch and laid it on the table by Ned's bedside, pressed the lad's hand, and retired.

An hour later four men entered with a litter; the servants had already packed Ned's mails, and he was carried down and placed on board one of the prince's vessels. They rowed down into the Maas, and then hoisting sail proceeded down the river, kept outside the islands to Walcheren, and then up the estuary of the Scheldt to Flushing. It was early morning when they arrived in port. Ned was carried upon deck, and soon made out the *Good Venture* lying a quarter of a mile away. He was at once placed in the boat and rowed alongside. An exclamation from Peters, as he looked over the side and saw Ned lying in the stern of the boat, called Captain Martin out from his cabin.

"Why, Ned, my dear boy!" he exclaimed, as he looked over the side; "you seem in grievous state indeed."

"There is not much the matter with me, father. I have had fever, but am getting over it, and it will need but a day or two at sea to put me on my feet again. I have done with the war at present, and the prince has been good enough to send me in one of his own galleys to you."

Ned was soon lifted on board, and carried into the cabin aft. The *Good Venture* had already discharged her cargo, and, as there was no chance of filling up again at Flushing, sail was made an hour after he was on board, and the vessel put out to sea.

Ned's convalescence was rapid, and by the time they entered the mouth of the Thames he was able to walk from side to side of the vessel, and as the wind still held from the west it was another four days before they dropped anchor near London Bridge. Ned would have gone ashore in his old attire; but upon putting it on the first day he was able to get about, he found he had so completely outgrown it that he was obliged to return to the garments he had worn in Holland.

He was now more than eighteen years of age, and nearly six feet in height. He had broadened out greatly, and the position he had for the last year held as an officer charged with authority by the prince had given him a manner of decision and authority beyond his years. As he could not wear his sailor dress he chose one of the handsomest of those he possessed.

Ned's mother and the girls were on the look-out, for the *Good Venture* had been noticed as she passed. Ned had at his father's suggestion kept below in order that he might give them a surprise on his arrival.

"I verily believe they won't know you," he said as they approached the gate. "You have grown four inches since they saw you last, and your cheeks are thin and pale instead of being round and sunburnt. This, with your

attire, has made such a difference that I am sure anyone would pass you in the street without knowing you."

Ned hung a little behind while his mother and the girls met his father at the gate. As soon as the embraces were over Captain Martin turned to Ned and said to his wife:

"My dear, I have to introduce an officer of the prince who has come over for his health to stay a while with us. This is Captain Martin."

Dame Martin gave a start of astonishment, looked incredulously for a moment at Ned, and then with a cry of delight threw herself into his arms.

"It really seems impossible that this can be Ned," she said, as, after kissing his sisters, he turned to her. "Why, husband, it is a man!"

"And a very fine one too, wife. He tops me by two inches; and as to his attire, I feel that we must all smarten up to be fit companions to such a splendid bird. Why, the girls look quite awed at him!"

"But you look terribly pale, Ned, and thin," his mother said; "and you were so healthy and strong."

"I shall soon be healthy and strong again, mother. When you have fed me up for a week on good English beef, you will see that there is no such great change in me after all."

"And now let us go inside," Captain Martin said; "there is a surprise for you there." Ned entered, and was indeed surprised at seeing his Aunt Elizabeth sitting by the fire, while his cousins were engaged upon their needlework at the window.

"When did you arrive, aunt?" Ned asked, when the greetings were over.

"Four months ago, Ned. Life was intolerable in Haarlem owing to the brutal conduct of the Spanish soldiers. I was a long time bringing myself to move. Had

it not been for the girls I should never have done so. But things became intolerable; and when most of the troops were removed at the time Count Louis advanced, we managed to leave the town and make our way north. It was a terrible journey to Enkhuizen; but we accomplished it, and after being there a fortnight took passage in a ship for England, and, as you see, here we are."

CHAPTER XIX

IN THE QUEEN'S SERVICE

JUST as Ned was leaving Delft some despatches had been placed in his hands for delivery upon his arrival in London to Lord Walsingham. The great minister was in attendance upon the queen at Greenwich, and thither Ned proceeded by boat on the morning after his arrival. On stating that he was the bearer of despatches from the Prince of Orange Ned at once obtained an audience, and bowing deeply presented his letters to the queen's counsellor. The latter opened the letter addressed himself, and after reading a few words said:

"Be seated, Captain Martin. The prince tells me that he sends it by your hand, but that as you are prostrate by fever you will be unable to deliver it personally. I am glad to see that you are so far recovered."

Ned seated himself, while Lord Walsingham continued the perusal of his despatches.

"The prince is pleased to speak in very high terms of you, Captain Martin," he said; "and tells me that as you are entirely in his confidence you will be able to give me much information besides that that he is able to write."

He then proceeded to question Ned at length as to the state of feeling in Holland, its resources and means of resistance, upon all of which points Ned replied fully. The interview lasted nearly two hours, at the end of which time Lord Walsingham said:

"When I hand the letter inclosed within my own to

the queen I shall report to her majesty very favourably as to your intelligence, and it may possibly be that she may desire to speak to you herself, for she is deeply interested in this matter."

Two days later one of the royal servants brought a message that Captain Martin was to present himself on the following day at Greenwich, as her majesty would be pleased to grant him an audience. Knowing that the queen loved that those around her should be bravely attired, Ned dressed himself in the suit that he had only worn once or twice when he had attended the prince to meetings of the Estates. He placed the chain the prince had given him round his neck, and with an ample ruff and manchets of Flemish lace, and his rapier by his side, he took his place in the boat, and was rowed to Greenwich. He felt some trepidation as he was ushered in. A page conducted him to the end of the chamber, where the queen was standing with Lord Walsingham at her side. Ned bowed profoundly, the queen held out her hand, and bending on one knee Ned reverently placed it to his lips.

"I am gratified, Captain Martin," she said, "at the manner in which my good cousin, the Prince of Orange, has been pleased to speak of your services to him. You are young indeed, sir, to have passed through such perilous adventures; and I would fain hear from your lips the account of the deliverance of Leyden, and of such other matters as you have taken part in."

The queen then seated herself, and Ned related modestly the events at Leyden, Haarlem, Alkmaar, and the two sea-fights in which he had taken part. The queen several times questioned him closely as to the various details.

"We are much interested," she said, "in these fights,

in which the burghers of Holland have supported themselves against the soldiers of Spain, seeing that we may ourselves some day have to maintain ourselves against that power. How comes it, young sir, that you came to mix yourself up in these matters?"

Ned then related the massacre of his Dutch relations by the Spaniards, and how his father had lost a leg while sailing out of Antwerp.

"I remember me now," the queen said. "The matter was laid before our council, and we remonstrated with the Spanish ambassador, and he in turn accused our seamen of having first sunk a Spanish galley without cause or reason. And when not employed in these dangerous enterprises of which you have been speaking, do you say that you have been in attendance upon the prince himself? He speaks in his letter to my Lord Walsingham of his great confidence in you. How came you first, a stranger and a foreigner, to gain the confidence of so wise and prudent a prince?"

"He intrusted a mission to me of some slight peril, your majesty, and I was fortunate enough to carry it out to his satisfaction."

"Tell me more of it," the queen said. "It may be that we ourselves shall find some employment for you, and I wish to know upon what grounds we should place confidence in you. Tell me fully the affair. I am not pressed for time, and love to listen to tales of adventure."

Ned thus commanded related in full the story of his mission to Brussels.

"Truly the prince's confidence was well reposed in you," she said, when Ned had finished. "You shall hear from us anon, Captain Martin."

So saying she again extended her hand to Ned, who, after kissing it, retired from the audience-chamber

delighted with the kindness and condescension of Elizabeth.

For the next three weeks Ned remained quietly at home. The gatherings in the summer-house were more largely attended than ever, and the old sailors were never tired of hearing from Ned stories of the sieges in Holland. Much of his time was spent in assisting his aunt to get her new house in order, and in aiding her to move into it. This had just been accomplished when he received an order to go down to Greenwich and call upon Lord Walsingham. He received from him despatches to be delivered to the Prince of Orange, together with many verbal directions for the prince's private ear. He was charged to ascertain as far as possible the prince's inclinations towards a French alliance, and what ground he had for encouragement from the French king.

"Upon your return, Captain Martin, you will render me an account of all expenses you have borne, and they will, of course, be defrayed."

"My expenses will be but small, my lord," Ned replied; "for it chances that my father's ship sails tomorrow for Rotterdam, and I shall take passage in her. While there I am sure that the prince, whose hospitality is boundless, will insist upon my staying with him as his guest."

There was some pause in military operations after the relief of Leyden. During the year 1575 the only military operation of importance was the recovery by the Spaniards of the Island of Schouwen. In March, 1576, Requesens died suddenly of a violent fever, brought on partly by anxiety caused by another mutiny of the troops. This mutiny more than counterbalanced the advantage gained by the capture of the Island of Schouwen, for after taking possession of it the soldiers engaged in the

service at once joined the mutiny and marched away into Brabant.

The position of Holland had gone from bad to worse, the utmost efforts of the population were needed to repair the broken dykes and again recover the submerged lands. Holland and Zeeland had now united in a confederacy, of which the prince was at the head, and by an Act of Union in June, 1575, the two little republics became virtually one. Holland suffered a great loss when Admiral Boisot fell in endeavouring to relieve Zierickzee.

The mutiny among the Spanish regiments spread rapidly, and the greater part of the German troops of Spain took part in it. The mutineers held the various citadels throughout the country, and ravaged the towns, villages, and open country. The condition of the people of Brabant was worse than ever. Despair led them to turn again to the provinces which had so long resisted the authority of Spain, and the fifteen other states, at the invitation of the prince, sent deputies to Ghent to a general congress, to arrange for a close union between the whole of the provinces of the Netherlands.

Ned Martin had now been two years engaged upon various missions to Holland, and Lord Walsingham himself acknowledged to his mistress that her choice of the young officer had been a singularly good one. He had conducted himself with great discretion, his reports were full and minute, and he had several times had audiences with the queen, and had personally related to her matters of importance concerning the state of Holland, and the views of the prince and the Estates-general. The congress at Ghent, and the agitation throughout the whole of the Netherlands, had created a lively interest in England, and Ned received orders to

visit Ghent and Antwerp, and to ascertain more surely the probability of an organisation of the provinces into a general confederation.

When he reached Ghent he found that the attention of the citizens was for the time chiefly occupied with the siege of the citadel, which was held by a Spanish garrison, and he therefore proceeded to Antwerp. This was at the time probably the wealthiest city in Europe. It carried on the largest commerce in the world, its warehouses were full of the treasures of all countries, its merchants vied with princes in splendour. The proud city was dominated, however, by its citadel, which had been erected not for the purpose of external defence but to overawe the town.

The governor of the garrison, D'Avila, had been all along recognised as one of the leaders of the mutiny. The town itself was garrisoned by Germans who still held aloof from the mutiny, but who had been tampered with by him. The governor of the city, Champagny, although a sincere Catholic, hated the Spaniards, and had entered into negotiations with the prince. The citizens thought at present but little of the common cause, their thoughts being absorbed by fears for their own safety, threatened by the mutinous Spanish troops who had already captured and sacked Alost, and were now assembling with the evident intention of gathering for themselves the rich booty contained within the walls of Antwerp.

As they approached the town, a force of 5,000 Walloon infantry and 1,200 cavalry were despatched from Brussels to the aid of its sister city. No sooner, however, did this force enter the town than it broke into a mutiny, which was only repressed with the greatest difficulty by Champagny. It was at this moment that Ned entered the city. He at once communicated with the governor,

and delivered to him some messages with which he had been charged by the Prince of Orange, whom he had visited on his way.

"Had you arrived three days since I could have discussed these matters with you," the governor said; "but as it is we are hourly expecting attack, and can think of nothing but preparations for defence. I shall be glad if you can assist me in that direction. Half the German garrison are traitors, the Walloons who have just entered are in no way to be relied upon, and it is the burghers themselves upon whom the defence of the town must really fall. They are now engaged in raising a rampart facing the citadel. I am at once proceeding thither to superintend the work."

Ned accompanied the governor to the spot and found twelve thousand men and women labouring earnestly to erect a rampart, constructed of bales of goods, casks of earth, upturned wagons, and other bulky objects. The guns of the fortress opened upon the workers, and so impeded them that night fell before the fortifications were nearly completed. Unfortunately it was bright moonlight, and the artillerymen continued their fire with such accuracy that the work was at last abandoned, and the citizens retired to their homes. Champagny did all that was possible. Aided by some burghers and his own servants, he planted what few cannon there were at the weakest points; but his general directions were all neglected, and not even scouts were posted.

In the morning a heavy mist hung over the city, and concealed the arrival of the Spanish troops from all the towns and fortresses in the neighbourhood. As soon as it was fairly daylight the defenders mustered. The Marquis of Havrè claimed for the Walloons the post of honour in defence of the lines facing the citadel; and 6,000 men were disposed here, while the bulk of the

German garrison were stationed in the principal squares.

At ten o'clock the mutineers from Alost marched into the citadel, raising the force there to 5,000 veteran infantry and 600 cavalry.

Ned had been all night at work assisting the governor. He had now laid aside his ordinary attire, and was clad in complete armour. He was not there to fight; but there was clearly nothing else to do, unless indeed he made his escape at once to the fleet of the Prince of Orange, which was lying in the river. This he did not like doing until it was clear that all was lost. He had seen the Dutch burghers beat back the most desperate assaults of the Spanish troops, and assuredly the Walloons and Germans, who, without counting the burghers, considerably exceeded the force of the enemy, ought to be able to do the same.

Just before daybreak he made his way down to the quays, ascertained the exact position of the fleet, and determined how he had best get on board. He chose a small boat from among those lying at the quay, and removed it to the foot of some stairs by a bridge. He fastened the head rope to a ring and pushed the boat off, so that it lay under the bridge, concealed from the sight of any who might pass along the wharves. Having thus prepared for his own safety, he was making his way to rejoin the governor when a woman came out from a house in a quiet street. As she met him he started.

"Why, Magdalene!" he exclaimed, "is it you? What are you doing in Antwerp? Is the countess here?"

The woman looked at him in surprise.

"Don't you remember me, Magdalene? the boy you dressed up as a girl at Brussels, and whom you last saw at Maastricht?"

"Bless me!" the old servant exclaimed, "is it you, sir? I should never have known you again."

"Three years make a great deal of difference," Ned laughed; "and it is more than that now since we last met."

"Please to come in, sir; the countess will be right glad to see you, and so will Miss Gertrude. They have talked of you hundreds of times, and wondered what had come of you." She opened the door again with the great key, and led the way into the house.

"Mistress," she said, showing the way into the parlour, "here is a visitor for you." The countess and her daughter had, like every one else in Antwerp, been up all night, and rose from her seat by the fire as the young officer entered. He took off his helmet and bowed deeply.

"What is your business with me?" the countess asked, seeing that he did not speak.

"I have not come exactly upon business, countess," he replied, "but to thank you for past kindnesses."

"Mother, it is the English boy!" exclaimed the young lady sitting upon the other side of the fire, rising from her seat. "Surely, sir, you are Master Edward Martin?"

"Your eyes are not in fault, Fraulein. I am Edward Martin."

"I am glad, indeed, to see you, sir," the countess said. "How often my daughter and I have longed for the time when we might again meet you to tell how grateful we are for the service you did us. We received the letter you wrote after leaving us at Brussels, from the Hague, telling us you had arrived safely. But since you did us that service at Maastricht we have never heard of you."

"I had not your address," Ned replied. "And even had I known where you were I should not have dared to

write; for there was no saying into whose hands the letter might not fall. But, countess, excuse me if I turn to other matters, for the time presses sorely. You know that the city will be attacked today."

"So everyone says," the countess replied. "But surely you do not think that there is any danger. The Walloons and Germans should be able alone to hold the barricades, and behind them are all the citizens."

"I put little faith in the Walloons," Ned said shortly; "and some of the Germans we know have been bribed. I fear, countess, that the danger is great; and if the Spaniards succeed in winning their way into the town, there is no mercy to be expected for man, woman, or child. I consider that it would be madness for you to stay here."

"But what are we to do, sir?" the countess asked.

"The only way, madam, is to make your way on board the prince's fleet. I am known to many of the officers, and can place you on board at once. If you wait until the Spaniards enter it will be too late. There will be a wild rush to the river, and the boats will be swamped. If the attack fails, and the Spaniards retire from before the city, you can if you choose return to shore, though I should say that even then it will be better by far to go to Rotterdam or Delft; unless you decide to do as you once talked about, to find a refuge for a time in England."

"I will accept your offer gladly, sir," the countess said. "I have long been looking for some way to leave the city. But none can go on board the ships without a pass, and I have not dared to ask for one. Not for worlds would I expose my daughter to the horrors of a sack. Can we go at once?"

"Yes, madam, I have everything in readiness, and would advise no delay."

CHAPTER XX

THE "SPANISH FURY"

IN a very short time the countess and her daughter returned to the room where Ned was awaiting them. Each carried a handbag.

"We are ready now," the countess said. "I have my jewels and purse. As for the things we leave behind, they are scarce worth the taking by the Spaniards."

Locking the door of the house behind them the three women accompanied Ned down to the river-side. He took the first boat that came to hand and rowed them down to the fleet, which was moored a quarter of a mile below the town. He passed the first ship or two, and then rowed to one with whose captain he was acquainted.

"Captain Enkin," he said, "I have brought on board two ladies who have long been in hiding, waiting an opportunity of being taken to Holland—the Countess Von Harp and her daughter. I fear greatly that Antwerp will fall today, and wish, therefore, to place them in safety before the fight begins."

"I am very pleased, madam," the captain said, bowing to the countess, "to receive you, and beg to hand over my cabin for your use."

Ned, on returning to shore, tied up the boat, and then proceeded to the palace of the governor. A servant was holding a horse at the door.

"The governor ordered this horse to be ready and saddled for you, sir, when you arrived, and begged you to join him at once in the market-place, where he is telling off the troops to their various stations."

Leaping on the horse, Ned rode to the market-place, and at once placed himself under orders of the governor.

"There is nothing much for you to do at present," Champagny said. "The troops are all in their places, and we are ready when they deliver the assault."

It was not until eleven o'clock that the Spaniards advanced to the attack—3,000 of them, under their Eletto, by the street of St. Michael; the remainder with the Germans, commanded by Romero, by that of St. George. No sooner did the compact masses approach the barricades than the Walloons, who had been so loud in their boasts of valour, and had insisted upon having the post of danger, broke and fled, their commander, Havrè, at their head; and the Spaniards, springing over the ramparts, poured into the streets.

"Fetch up the Germans from the exchange!" Champagny shouted to Ned; and leaping his horse over a garden wall, he himself rode to another station and brought up the troops there, and led them in person to bar the road to the enemy, trying in vain to rally the flying Walloons he met on the way. For a few minutes the two parties of Germans made a brave stand; but they were unable to resist the weight and number of the Spaniards, who bore them down by sheer force. Champagny had fought gallantly in the mêlée, and Ned, keeping closely beside him, had well seconded his efforts; but when the Germans were borne down they rode off, dashing through the streets and shouting to the burghers everywhere to rise in defence of their homes.

They answered to the appeal. The bodies already collected at the exchange and cattle market moved forward, and from every house the men poured out. The Spanish columns had already divided, and were pouring down the streets with savage cries. The German cavalry of Havrè under Van Eude at once deserted, and joining

the Spanish cavalry fell upon the townsmen. In vain the burghers and such of the German infantry as remained faithful strove to resist their assailants. Although they had been beaten off in their assaults upon breaches, the Spaniards had ever proved themselves invincible on level ground; and now, inspired alike by the fury for slaughter and the lust for gold, there was no withstanding them.

Round the exchange some of the bravest defenders made a rally, and burghers and Germans, mingled together, fought stoutly until they were all slain.

There was another long struggle round the town hall, one of the most magnificent buildings in Europe; and for a time the resistance was effective, until the Spanish cavalry and the Germans under the traitor Van Eude charged down upon the defenders. Then they took refuge in the buildings, and every house became a fortress, and from window and balcony a hot fire was poured into the square. But now a large number of camp-followers who had accompanied the Spaniards came up with torches, which had been specially prepared for firing the town, and in a short time the city hall and other edifices in the square were in flames.

The fire spread rapidly from house to house and from street to street, until nearly a thousand buildings in the most splendid and wealthy portion of the city were in a blaze.

In the street behind the town hall a last stand was made. Here the margrave of the city, the burgomasters, senators, soldiers, and citizens fought to the last, until not one remained to wield a sword. When resistance had ceased the massacre began. Women, children, and old men were killed in vast numbers, or driven into the river to drown there.

Then the soldiers scattered on the work of plunder. The flames had already snatched treasures estimated at

six millions from their grasp, but there was still abundance for all. The most horrible tortures were inflicted upon men, women, and children to force them to reveal the hiding-places, where they were supposed to have concealed their wealth, and for three days a pandemonium reigned in the city. Two thousand five hundred had been slain, double that number burned and drowned. These are the lowest estimates, many placing the killed at very much higher figures.

Champagny had fought very valiantly, joining any party of soldiers or citizens he saw making a defence. At last, when the town hall was in flames and all hope over, he said to Ned, who had kept throughout the day at his side: "It is no use throwing away our lives. Let us cut our way out of the city."

"I have a boat lying in readiness at the bridge," Ned said. "If we can once reach the stairs we can make our way off to the fleet."

As they approached the river they saw a Spanish column crossing the street ahead of them. Putting spurs to their horses they galloped on at full speed, and bursting into it hewed their way through and continued their course, followed, however, by a number of the Spanish infantry.

"These are the steps!" Ned exclaimed, leaping from his horse.

Champagny followed his example. The Spaniards were but twenty yards behind.

"If you pull on that rope attached to the ring a boat under the bridge will come to you," Ned said. "I will keep them back till you are ready."

Ned turned and faced the Spaniards, and for two or three minutes kept them at bay. His armour was good, and though many blows struck him he was uninjured, while several of the Spaniards fell under his sweeping

blows. They fell back for a moment, surprised at his strength; and at this instant the governor called out that all was ready.

Ned turned and rushed down the steps. The governor was already in the boat. Ned leaped on board, and with a stroke of his sword severed the head rope. Before the leading Spaniards reached the bottom of the steps the boat was a length away. Ned seated himself, and seizing the oars rowed down the river. Several shots were fired at them from the bridge and wharves as they went, but they passed on uninjured. Ned rowed to the admiral's ship and left the governor there, and then rowed to that of Captain Enkin.

The shades of night had now fallen, and over a vast space the flames were mounting high, and a pall of red smoke, interspersed with myriads of sparks and flakes of fire, hung over the captured city. Occasional discharges of guns were still heard, and the shrieks of women and the shouts of men rose in confused din. It was an immense relief to all on board when an hour later the admiral, fearing that the Spaniards might bring artillery to bear upon the fleet, ordered the anchors to be weighed, and the fleet to drop down a few miles below the town.

After taking off his armour, washing the blood from his wounds and having them bound up, and attiring himself in a suit lent him by the captain until he should get to Delft, where he had left his valise, Ned partook of a good meal, for he had taken nothing but a manchet of bread and a cup of wine since the previous night. He then went into the cabin and spent the evening in conversation with the countess and her daughter, the latter of whom had changed since they had last met to the full as much as he had himself done. She had then been a girl of fourteen—slim and somewhat tall for her age, and

looking pale and delicate from the life of confinement and anxiety they had led at Brussels, and their still greater anxiety at Maastricht. She was now budding into womanhood. Her figure was lissom and graceful, her face was thoughtful and intelligent, and gave promise of rare beauty in another year or two. He learned that they had remained for a time in the village to which they had first gone, and had then moved to another village a few miles away, and had there lived quietly in a small house placed at their disposal by one of their friends. Here they had remained unmolested until two months before, when the excesses committed throughout the country by the mutinous soldiery rendered it unsafe for anyone to live outside the walls of the town. They then removed to Antwerp, where there was far more religious toleration than at Brussels; and the countess had resumed her own name, though still living in complete retirement in the house in which Ned had so fortunately found her.

"The times have altered with me for the better," the countess said. "The Spaniards have retired from that part of Friesland where some of my estates are situated, and those to whom Alva granted them have had to fly. I have a faithful steward there, and since they have left he has collected the rents and has remitted to me such portions as I required, sending over the rest to England to the charge of a banker there. As it may be that the Spaniards will again sweep over Friesland, where they still hold some of the principal towns, I thought it best, instead of having my money placed in Holland, where no one can foresee the future, to send it to England, where at least one can find a refuge and a right to exercise our religion."

"I would that you would go there at once, countess; for surely at present Holland is no place for two unprotected ladies. Nothing would give my mother greater

pleasure than to receive you until you can find a suitable home for yourselves."

"What do you say, Gertrude?" the countess asked. "But I know that your mind has been so long made up that it is needless to question you."

"Yes indeed, mother, I would gladly go away anywhere from here, where for the last six years there has been nothing but war and bloodshed. I should be so glad to be away from it all."

"It is as my daughter says, Captain Martin; our thoughts have long been turning to England as a refuge. Now that the chance is open to us, we will not refuse it. I do not say that we will cross at once. We have many friends at Rotterdam and Delft, and the prince held my husband in high esteem in the happy days before the troubles; therefore I shall tarry there for a while, but it will be for a time only. You say that you come backwards and forwards often, well then in two months we shall be ready to put ourselves under your protection and to sail with you to England."

The next morning the admiral despatched a ship to Rotterdam with the news of the fate of Antwerp, and Ned obtained a passage in her for himself, the ladies, and servant, and on arriving at Rotterdam saw them bestowed in comfortable lodgings. He then, after an interview with the prince, went on board a ship just leaving for England, and upon his arrival reported to the minister, and afterwards to the queen herself, the terrible massacre of which he had been a witness in Antwerp.

The Spanish fury, as the sack of Antwerp was termed, vastly enriched the soldiers, but did small benefit to the cause of Spain. The attack was wanton and unprovoked. Antwerp had not risen in rebellion against Philip, but had been attacked solely for the sake of plunder; and all

Europe was shocked at the atrocities that had taken place.

In the Netherlands the feeling of horror and indignation was universal. The fate that had befallen Antwerp might be that of any sister city. Everywhere petitions were signed in favour of the unity of all the Netherlands under the Prince of Orange. Philip's new governor, Don John, had reached the Netherlands on the very day of the sack of Antwerp, and endeavoured to allay the storm of indignation it had excited by various concessions; but the feeling of unity, and with it of strength, had grown so rapidly that the demands of the commissioners advanced in due proportion, and they insisted upon nothing less than the restoration of their ancient constitution, the right to manage their internal affairs, and the departure of all the Spanish troops from the country.

Don John parleyed and parried the demands, and months were spent in unprofitable discussions, while all the time he was working secretly among the nobles of Brabant and Flanders, who were little disposed to see with complacency the triumph of the democracy of the towns and the establishment of religious toleration. Upon all other points Don John and his master were ready to yield. The Spanish troops were sent away to Italy, the Germans only being retained. The constitutional rights would all have been conceded, but on the question of religious tolerance Philip stood firm. At last, seeing that no agreement would ever be arrived at, both parties prepared again for war.

The Queen of England had lent £100,000 on the security of the cities, and the pause in hostilities during the negotiations had not been altogether wasted in Holland. There had been a municipal insurrection in Amsterdam; the magistrates devoted to Philip had been

driven out, and to the great delight of Holland, Amsterdam, its capital that had long been a stronghold of the enemy, a gate through which he could at will pour his forces, was restored to it. In Antwerp, and several other of the cities of Brabant and Flanders, the citizens razed the citadels by which they had been overawed; men, women, and children uniting in the work, tearing down and carrying away the stones of the fortresses that had worked them such evil.

Antwerp had at the departure of the Spanish troops been again garrisoned by Germans, who had remained inactive during this exhibition of the popular will. The Prince of Orange himself had paid a visit to the city, and had, at the invitation of Brussels, proceeded there, and had received an enthusiastic reception, and for a time it seemed that the plans for which so many years he had struggled were at last to be crowned with success. But his hopes were frustrated by the treachery of the nobles and the cowardice of the army the patriots had engaged in their service.

Many of the Spanish troops had been secretly brought back again, and Don John was preparing for a renewal of the war.

Unknown to the Prince of Orange, numbers of the nobles had invited the Archduke Mathias, brother of the Emperor Rudolph of Germany, to assume the government. Mathias, without consultation with his brother, accepted the invitation and journeyed privately to the Netherlands. Had the Prince of Orange declared against him he must at once have returned to Vienna, but this would have aroused the anger of the emperor and the whole of Germany. Had the prince upon the other hand abandoned the field and retired into Holland, he would have played into the hands of his adversaries. Accordingly he received Mathias at Antwerp with great state,

and the archduke was well satisfied to place himself in the hands of the most powerful man in the country.

The prince's position was greatly strengthened by the queen instructing her ministers to inform the envoy of the Netherlands that she would feel compelled to withdraw all succour of the states if the Prince of Orange was deprived of his leadership, as it was upon him alone that she relied for success. The prince was thereupon appointed Ruward of Brabant, a position almost analogous to that of dictator. Ghent, which was second only in importance to Antwerp, rose almost immediately, turned out the Catholic authorities, and declared in favour of the prince. A new act of union was signed at Brussels, and the Estates-general passed a resolution declaring Don John to be no longer governor or stadtholder of the Netherlands. The Prince of Orange was appointed lieutenant-general for Mathias, and the actual power of the latter was reduced to a nullity, but he was installed at Brussels with the greatest pomp and ceremony.

Don John, who had by this time collected an army of 20,000 veterans at Namur, and had been joined by the Prince of Parma, a general of great vigour and ability, now marched against the army of the Estates, of which the command had been given to the nobles of the country in the hope of binding them firmly to the national cause.

The patriot army fell back before that of the Spaniards, but were soon engaged by a small body of cavalry. Alexander of Parma came up with some 1,200 horse, dashed boldly across a dangerous swamp, and fell upon their flank. The Estates cavalry at once turned and fled, and Parma then fell upon the infantry, and in the course of an hour not only defeated but almost exterminated them, from 7,000 to 8,000 being killed, and 600

taken prisoners, the latter being executed without mercy by Don John. The loss of the Spaniards was only about ten men. This extraordinary disproportion of numbers, and the fact that 1,200 men so easily defeated a force ten times more numerous, completely dashed to the ground the hopes of the Netherlands, and showed how utterly incapable were its soldiers of contending in the field with the veterans of Spain.

The battle was followed by the rapid reduction of a large number of towns, most of which surrendered without resistance as soon as the Spanish troops approached. In the meantime the Estates had assembled another army, which was joined by one composed of 12,000 Germans under Duke Casimir. Both armies were rendered inactive by want of funds, and the situation was complicated by the entry of the Duke Alençon, the brother of the King of France, into the Netherlands. Don John, who had shown himself on many battlefields to be at once a great commander and a valiant soldier, was prostrate by disease. At this critical moment his malady increased, and after a week's illness he expired, just two years after his arrival in the Netherlands.

He was succeeded at first temporarily and afterwards permanently by Alexander of Parma.

The two years had been spent by Edward Martin in almost incessant journeyings between London and the Netherlands. He now held, however, a position much superior to that which he had formerly occupied. The queen, after hearing from him his account of the sack of Antwerp and his share in the struggle, had said to the Secretary, "I think that it is only just that we should bestow upon Captain Martin some signal mark of our approbation at the manner in which he has for two years devoted himself to our service, and that without pay or reward, but solely from his loyalty to our person.

and from his good-will towards the state. Kneel, Captain Martin." The queen took the sword that Walsingham handed to her, and said, "Rise, Sir Edward Martin. You will draw out, Mr. Secretary, our new knight's appointment as our special envoy to the Prince of Orange; and see that he has proper appointments for such a post. His duties will, as before, be particular to myself and the prince, and will not clash in any way with those of our envoy at the Hague."

The delight of Ned's mother and sisters when he returned home and informed them of the honour that the queen had been pleased to bestow upon him was great indeed. His father said:

"Well, Ned, I must congratulate you with the others; though I had hoped to make a sailor of you. However, circumstances have been too much for me. I own that you have been thrust into this work rather by fortune than design; and as it is so I am heartily glad that you have succeeded."

Ned was not sent abroad again for more than a month, and during that time he was almost daily at court. He was glad when the order came to proceed again to Holland with messages to the Prince of Orange. Upon his arrival there he was warmly congratulated by the prince.

"You have well earned your rank," the prince said. "I take some pride to myself in having so soon discovered that you had good stuff in you. There are some friends of yours here who will be glad to hear of the honour that has befallen you. The Countess Von Harp and her daughter have been here for the last six weeks. One of my pages will show you where they are lodging. They are about to proceed to England, and I think their decision is a wise one."

The countess and her daughter were alike surprised and pleased when Ned was announced as Sir Edward

Martin. And when a fortnight later Ned sailed for England, they took passage in the same ship. Ned had sent word to his mother by a vessel that sailed a week previously that they would arrive with him, and the best room in the house had been got in readiness for them, and they received a hearty welcome from Ned's parents and sisters. They stayed a fortnight there and then established themselves in a pretty little house in the village of Dulwich. One of Ned's sisters accompanied them to stay for a time as Gertrude's friend and companion.

Whenever Ned returned home he was a frequent visitor at Dulwich, and at the end of two years his sisters were delighted but not surprised when he returned one day and told them that Gertrude Von Harp had accepted him. The marriage was not to take place for a time; for Ned was still young, and the countess thought it had best be delayed.

Alexander of Parma had by means of his agents corrupted the greater part of the nobility of Flanders and Brabant, had laid siege to Maastricht, and, after a defence even more gallant and desperate than that of Haarlem, and several terrible repulses of his soldiers, had captured the city and put the greater part of its inhabitants—men and women—to the sword. After vain entreaties to Elizabeth to assume the sovereignty of the Netherlands, this had been offered to the Duke of Anjou, brother of the King of France.

The choice appeared to be a polite one, for Anjou was at the time the all but accepted suitor of Queen Elizabeth, and it was thought that the choice would unite both powers in defence of Holland. The duke, however, speedily proved his incapacity. Irritated at the smallness of the authority granted him, and the independent attitude of the great towns, he attempted to capture

them by force. He was successful in several places; but at Antwerp, where the French thought to repeat the Spanish success and to sack the city, the burghers gathered so strongly and fiercely that the French troops employed were for the most part killed, those who survived being ignominiously taken prisoners.

Anjou retired with his army, losing a large number of men on his retreat by the bursting of a dyke and the flooding of the country. By this time the Prince of Orange had accepted the sovereignty of Holland and Zeeland, which was now completely separated from the rest of the Netherlands. After the flight of Anjou he received many invitations from the other provinces to accept their sovereignty; but he steadily refused, having no personal ambition, and knowing well that no reliance whatever could be placed upon the nobles of Brabant and Flanders.

On the 10th of July, 1584, a deep gloom was cast over all Holland and England, by the assassination of the Prince of Orange. He fell a victim to the bullet of an assassin, who came before him disguised as a petitioner. His murderer was captured, and put to death with horrible tortures, boasting of his crime to the last. It was proved beyond all question that he was acting at the instigation of the Spanish authorities. Thus died the greatest statesman of his age.

Terrible as was the blow to the Netherlands, it failed to have the effect which its instigators had hoped from it. On the very day of the murder the Estates of Holland, then sitting at Delft, passed a resolution "to maintain the good cause, with God's help, to the uttermost, without sparing gold or blood." The prince's eldest son had been kidnapped from school in Leyden by Philip's orders, and had been a captive in Spain for seventeen years under the tutorship of the Jesuits. Maurice, the

next son, now seventeen years old, was appointed head of the States Council.

The position of the Netherlands was still well-nigh desperate. Flanders and Brabant lay at the feet of the Spaniards. A rising which had lately taken place had been crushed. Bruges had surrendered without a blow. The Duke of Parma, with 18,000 troops, besides his garrisons, was threatening Ghent, Mechlin, Brussels, and Antwerp, and was freely using promises and bribery to induce them to surrender. Dendermonde and Vilvoorde both opened their gates, the capitulation of the latter town cutting the communication between Brussels and Antwerp. Ghent followed the example and surrendered without striking a blow, and at the moment of the assassination of the Prince of Orange Parma's army was closing round Antwerp.

After a long siege the town fell. This led to the entire submission of Brabant and Flanders, and henceforth the war was continued solely by Zeeland. Holland and Friesland.

The death of the Prince of Orange, and the fall of Antwerp, marked the conclusion of what may be called the first period of the struggle of the Netherlands for freedom. It was henceforth to enter upon another phase. England, which had long assisted Holland privately with money, and openly by the raising of volunteers for her service, was now about to enter the arena boldly and to play an important part in the struggle, which, after a long period of obstinate strife, was to end in the complete emancipation of the Netherlands from the yoke of Spain.

Sir Edward Martin married Gertrude von Harp soon after his return to England. He retained the favour of Elizabeth to the day of her death, and there were few whose counsels had more influence with her. He long continued in the public service, although no longer

compelled to do so as a means of livelihood; for as Holland and Zeeland freed themselves from the yoke of Spain, and made extraordinary strides in wealth and prosperity, the estates of the countess once more produced a splendid revenue, and this at her death came entirely to her daughter. A considerable portion of Sir Edward Martin's life, when not actually engaged upon public affairs, was spent upon the broad estates which had come to him from his wife.

